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THE NATURE AND COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

CONSIDERED GENERALLY

IN

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXLIX.

AT THE

LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M.A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY

R. MICHELL, B. D.

VICE-PRINCIPAL OF MAGDALEN HALL,

AND LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF LINCOLN COLLEGE.

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EXTRACT

FROM

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— "I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to "the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University "of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold all and sin- "gular the said Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the "intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned; that is to "say, I will and appoint that the Vice-Chancellor of the "University of Oxford for the time being shall take and "receive all the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and "(after all taxes, reparations, and necessary deductions "made) that he pay all the remainder to the endowment "of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be established for "ever in the said University, and to be performed in the "manner following:

"I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday in "Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the Heads "of Colleges only, and by no others, in the room adjoin- "ing to the Printing-House, between the hours of ten in "the morning and two in the afternoon, to preach eight "Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St. "Mary's in Oxford, between the commencement of the "last month in Lent Term, and the end of the third week "in Act Term.

"Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity "Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the "following Subjects—to confirm and establish the Chris- "tian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics "—upon the divine authority of the holy Scriptures— "upon the authority of the writings of the primitive Fa- "thers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive Church "—upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus "Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost—upon the "Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the "Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

"Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divinity "Lecture Sermons shall be always printed, within two "months after they are preached, and one copy shall be "given to the Chancellor of the University, and one copy "to the Head of every College, and one copy to the Mayor "of the city of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the "Bodleian Library; and the expense of printing them shall "be paid out of the revenue of the Land or Estates given "for establishing the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the "Preacher shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, "before they are printed.

"Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be "qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons, un- "less he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts at least, "in one of the two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge; "and that the same person shall never preach the Divinity "Lecture Sermons twice."

TO

THE HEADS OF COLLEGES

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

THE

FOLLOWING SERMONS,

PREACHED BY THEIR APPOINTMENT,

ARE RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED.

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SERMON I.

PSALM LXXXII. 6.

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most high.

NOTHING in Holy Scripture can interest us more deeply than the accounts to be found therein of the relations in which mankind stand to the most high God. A perfect knowledge of these relations, comprehending true and distinct perceptions of all the duties and obligations involved in them, and implying also, of necessity, considerable insight into the Natures both of God and man, is no very unworthy representation of *Religion* itself:—and without some portion of such knowledge (however we may attain to it) it seems highly probable that we should none of us be equal to the task of rightly understanding the *Evidences* which a Revelation or Divine message might offer to our acceptance.

Let it suffice at the outset to state the connexion between religion and its evidences

thus generally. But these general statements, it must be observed, admit of being so shaped and modified as to become applicable to all the forms in which these momentous subjects do or can present themselves to the infinite variety of human minds. This will be abundantly shewn as we proceed. I shall now simply call attention to one only *principle*,—call we it *idea*, *law*, or *fact*;—which may be said to lie at the bottom of all our speculative treatment of religious questions; and by virtue of which the truth in which they terminate, and the grounds upon which it claims to be received, are seen to be adjusted in the harmony of an exact mutual adaptation. Nor is this a principle appertaining to religious truth alone. For that there is an affinity or correspondence discernible in *all* evidences with reference both to their subject-matter and their result, is among the recorded observations of very early heathen philosophy; and many indeed may think it impossible, or at least highly improbable, that the philosophical spirit of man should have been for any considerable length of time in active operation without being led to the discovery or reflection, that our notions of *matter*, *evidence*, *truth*, *belief*, and some others, (in whatsoever department of inquiry

we may employ them,) are but a series of strictly correlative conceptions, and that consequently differences of character to be found in any one of them must be attended by precisely corresponding diversities in all the rest.

I must not, however, be understood to assert, that religious truth, and far less that Christian truth, resembles the formal systems of human philosophy by being methodically taught in the records which contain it. The very contrary to this is the well-known and often-observed fact. The writers of the New Testament, for example, shew but little regard to what we call Method. But Christianity, notwithstanding this, is a *scheme;* and it is so, potentially, even in the writings of its inspired teachers. And when considered as a scheme, its parts must of necessity cohere, and thus be rendered capable of exhibition in some sort of connected and harmonious order. But in this we see nothing more than is essential to every thing truly falling under the description of a *dispensation*, *economy*, or *system;* and the observation applies not only when such economy or scheme is objectively regarded, but also when we view it in its relation to the mind of the recipient; for it must be all

along remembered that it is *his* apprehension of its contents which must constitute the *knowledge*, *his* seeing that must eventually become, or at any rate determine, the *evidence* desired.

And so it might be contended, if we so pleased, *in limine*, that Theology, in order to be Theology, or in other words a Science at all, must from its very nature be in the proper acceptation of the term dogmatical. If, indeed, by dogmatic theology be meant a mere congeries of religious opinions arbitrarily packed into some semblance of scientific arrangement, or again as a set of doctrines deduced with whatever amount of logical accuracy from axioms and principles which can be shewn themselves to rest upon insufficient authority of any sort, then we must in the spirit of Lord Bacon reject such system, even as that great man repudiated the theories of physical knowledge which were current in his day. Such kinds of religious theory would be obviously unphilosophical, and they might be untrue. But if dogmatic theology be understood to mean a system of doctrines duly deduced from principles which indubitably appear in Holy Writ, there can be no solid reason for denouncing or disparaging a dogmatism of this kind, however

emphatically it may be propounded. It is one of the objects, if I mistake not, of the Sixth Article of our Church, expressly to authorize such formal constructions of a religious Creed. In the words "can be proved thereby," the Article both warrants and invites the employment in our processes of theological deduction, of such precise, distinct, and positive declarations, to be read in either Testament, as may serve for the data or major principles in our reasoning upon points doctrinal. Can this be anything else than sanctioning dogmatic theology in its true meaning? Does not the next series of the Articles themselves—those, I mean, from the Ninth to the Fifteenth inclusive—present us with an obvious *application* of the principle? An ill feeling, no doubt, exists in many quarters towards dogmatic theology; but it is more surely against the name, or the associations not unnaturally connected with the name, than against the true and rightful conception of its nature. Nor should it be forgotten, that Hobbes and a host of other most strenuous anti-dogmatists, have, in point of fact, only argued against it in a debased and spurious form. But surely, to define dogmatism in the present day, so as to take into the account the ignorance, vainglory, or

pertinacity, with which parties may hold their opinions, or strive to impose them upon others, would be as irrelevant and irrational, as if professing to examine into the validity of a reasoning process, we were to make the desire of gain, or of reputation, or of any other contingent advantage, the criterion of a Sophist.

We might thus contend then, I repeat, for a sort of *internal necessity* (so to speak) in the case of dogmatic theology, very different from that external necessity which is conceded to it by some, and which arises simply out of the Social character of religion. Those who are content with this latter aspect of the subject, consistently regard dogmatic theology in the light of a necessary evil, very much of the same description as a standing army, or a police, or any other precautional establishment of the like kind; and they reckon it, by consequence, among the *penalties* of man's social condition. And, no doubt, we may freely concede to them, that if all who profess and call themselves Christians were to act up to their profession, these safeguards—I do not except or reserve even the formularies of our own Church, preeminent as they are above all human compilations of doctrinal truth—might be dispensed with. But such expectations, all must own, are not

warranted by the actual state of the Christian world; and consequently, even those who are most adverse to a dogmatic theology despair for the most part of the extinction of Creeds and similar formularies, which they foresee can never happen until some vast alteration shall have taken place in the phases of society, if not in the mental constitution of man itself.

More cannot now be said upon this very important subject. I will only remark with reference to the antagonist method, that any views of an *inductive* theology which may contemplate the establishment by the Baconian or any other kindred method, of ultimate truths at variance with the ascertained truth of Holy Writ, must be *conceived* in an Antichristian spirit; and should the results contemplated be actually arrived at, the choice would still remain (a choice in nowise embarrassing to the pious reasoner) between the express mind of God on the one hand, and the more doubtful (by comparison) inferences of man's logical faculty on the other. No such alternative however needs be dreaded; since, happily, the inductive reasonings hitherto *completed* in many branches of even physical research, (take Geology, for instance), have tended, it would appear, to verify and

confirm such contents of the Sacred Volume as can with any reason be presumed to admit of being tested by them. This I may assume to be *now* too generally allowed (in this place at least) to require the adduction of any formal proof. And accordingly we need not discourage the application of the inductive process to the doctrines of Revelation, provided it be conducted within certain limits, and in a proper disposition of mind. In the way of a very general statement, I might say that Caution is the mental condition which suffices for a right procedure in this case. Caution, in fact, is admitted by some to be the only postulate. "All that we ask," writes an able advocate of induction in its application to the moral sciences, "all that we ask of our reader is, to bring along with him the same sober and inductive spirit that is now deemed so necessary in the prosecution of other sciences; to abandon *every system* of theology, that is not so supported by evidence, however much it may gratify his taste, or regale his imagination; and to admit *any* system of theology that is supported by evidence, however repugnant to his feelings or his prejudices." It is gratifying to be able to add, that the result of the trial of the inductive process,

as it was conducted under these rigid and unbending rules, by the able writer whom I have just quoted, was an earnest appeal to every enlightened disciple of Lord Bacon to acknowledge, "that the same habits of philosophizing to which science is indebted for all her elevation in these later days, will lead us to cast down all our lofty imaginations, and bring into 'captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ[a].'"

In perfect consistency with the foregoing remarks, is the requirement so commonly and so justly made, that the religious student should come to the study of Divine things with appropriate and duly-cherished feelings of humility, patience, docility, and singleness of heart, and not in an undisciplined and froward temper of mind. Philosophy, the arts, and, in short, every regular employment of the human faculties requires a similar preparation on the part of the learner. But in religious inquiries more than in all others are such predispositions indispensable; and the absence of them in the case of the searcher after Divine Truth will be sure to operate as the most effectual hinderance to spiritual advancement; if indeed it do not absolutely preclude from taking the very first steps in

[a] 2 Cor. x. 5.

religious knowledge, by leaving the mind open for the growth of an indifference or habitual contumacy, as injurious in the eye of sound philosophy, as it is offensive and sinful before God. For in religion (besides many other considerations tending to the same point) the vast expanse over which the inquiry is extended, comprising the world of mind as well as matter, the unseen no less than the seen, renders it obvious that the disciple must *here* far more than elsewhere, be prepared to meet with many difficulties, both as respects the objects of his contemplation, and the degrees of assurance with which he confides in their reality. And here accordingly the aspirant after knowledge needs to be especially guarded against that *unteachableness* which we too well discern to be part of the natural man as he now is—that ἀτοπία[b] of which St. Paul speaks, as characterising the υἱοὶ τῆς ἀπειθείας[c], "sons of disobedience," and far different, we may be sure, from that true nobility of mind which we read that the same apostle met with on[d] one occasion, and without which none should presume to set foot on the sacred ground, to approach even the hallowed enclosure of the

[b] 2 Thess. iii. 2. [c] Ephes. ii. 2; v. 6; Col. iii. 6.
[d] Acts xvii. 11.

Temple of Truth—far less indulge the hope of being admitted to adore her as she is here seen in her most effulgent, her celestial form.

The claim which *Christianity* advances to the possession of all religious truth is well-known. Every religion, we are aware, professes an identity with truth to a greater or less extent; and the *prima facie* grounds upon which the Christian affirms his religion to be like its Divine Author, *the* Truth, are in a general way familiar to all who hear me. Nevertheless it may not be unprofitable at this early stage to occupy a short space, if only by way of remembrance, in noticing a few points which may serve to connect the whole Christian scheme with the momentous truth delivered in the text. And this I shall do the more willingly, because on the broad maxim already propounded, the principles which should govern us in the consideration of the *matter* of Divine truth must be useful also in our examination into the character of its *evidence*.

Now the text, if interpreted in that full and comprehensive sense which our Blessed Lord's own application[e] of it in St. John's Gospel is conceived to warrant, may be looked upon as expressing the purpose of God

[e] John x. 34.

throughout all his gracious dispensations towards his creature man; inasmuch as it approximates in some way or other the nature of man to that of his heavenly Father; which we are prone to describe in general terms as the object of religion. I do not mean, of course, to contend for a literal interpretation of the words "Ye are Gods, and ye are the children of the Most High," any more than that similar propositions occurring in Holy Scripture, such as, "Ye are our epistle[d]," "This is my body[e]," and some others, are to be accepted in a literal sense. I may observe, once for all, upon such texts, that the substantive verb employed in them does not denote absolute and unrestricted identity. And so the words before us cannot, it is manifest, be used to justify any wild imaginative theories, Pantheistic or other, which have nevertheless made their appearance at different times in the history of the Church, tending to exalt the human being to an actual level with his Creator in intellectual or spiritual dignity. On the contrary, no sober and rational exposition of the words, if comporting duly with the analogy of faith, can ever invest mankind with the essential

[d] 2 Cor. iii. 2. [e] Matth. xxvi. 26.

properties of the Divine Nature, which are correctly therefore called by theologians *incommunicable.* Accordingly the Jews, whom some learned writers conceive to have recognised in Jehovah no other sort of paternity than that involved in the idea of creation—were sorely perplexed when they found themselves confronted with this quotation from their own Scriptures. We may with good reason suppose them to have been sensible of that shock and recoil of mind (so to speak) which all naturally experience when the ideas of God and man are presented simultaneously and vividly before their minds—a feeling best exemplified perhaps by recalling our own sensations when we first heard our Blessed Lord himself designated as the God-Man. It was this, in fact, which had caused the violent ebullition which our Lord saw fit to rebuke by the application of the words before us. And well calculated was His answer to silence the cavils of his countrymen, since it conveyed at once and most forcibly to their understandings, a mystery quite as great or greater than the assumption which had so grievously offended them. He showed them that the blasphemy with which they charged him, might be with equal justice imputed to the recorded language of undoubted inspira-

tion. In a book which they venerated and professed to understand, a declaration was made by an inspired prophet, as though from the mouth of Jehovah himself, which they had plainly either forgotten or misunderstood—a declaration couched in still stronger and more awful terms than those which had occasioned the outburst of their indignation against himself. And this announcement, they could not but reflect, was made not with reference to one "approved (ἀποδεδειγμένος) among them by miracles, and signs and wonders[f]," but to certain functionaries who lived at a debased period of the history of their nation, and who could not certainly be accounted the most righteous or heavenly-minded of their progenitors. To these men nevertheless had the words of the seer Asaph been addressed: "Ye are gods, and all of you the children of the Most High."

But whilst we disclaimed all such interpretations of the text as would positively extinguish the essential differences between God and Man, we might yet contend for a sense which should extend its application to the whole race of mankind. "Ye are *all of you* the children of the Most High," is a truth which in a certain sense is not restricted to

[f] Acts ii. 22.

the Jews, or to Christians, or even to both, but appertains alike to all men—to all the inheritors of the nature, fallen and marred though it be, of the first Adam, of whom it is written, that he was "the Son of God." But the sense in which we are most concerned to interpret it, is not of this vague and indeterminate character, but is one which makes the statement, "Ye are the children of the Most High," as it were, the distinctive *motto* and *manifesto* of Christianity. For that Christians are God's children in an especial manner—that is, by their adoption in Christ, the second Adam; and that in virtue of this propinquity of relationship they are above all men entitled to say, "Abba, Father[g]," and "Our Father,"—may be shown by numerous passages in the New Testament, as well as by many intimations of the earlier teaching of the Prophets. I pass them now, nor shall I do more than make allusion to the subject of the Baptismal Rite, or Sacrament of Baptism, which we all know to be intimately associated with the truth before us. How it is that by being made the subject of this solemn rite, the Christian secures to himself the privilege of being in a peculiarly strong sense the son of God; in a word, the

[g] Gal. iii. 26; iv. 6.

efficacy of Christian baptism, has, I may observe also, been the theme of more than one of the eminent persons who have preceded me in this office.

A few general observations on the natures of the Two Beings which Religion may (even in its etymological sense) be said to bind together, or in other words, to place on a footing of reciprocal obligation; and the notice of which, we might say, comprises in a compendious way the *matter* of our holy religion, and thus may be thought to supply a becoming introduction to that review of its Evidences which is designed to form the immediate subject of the ensuing course of Lectures, will exhaust the remaining portion of time allotted to this *first* Lecture.

I. And first with respect to the Divine Nature: of which, however, we cannot take cognizance further than as it is faintly pourtrayed in what we call the Attributes of God. The believer discovers in these aspects of the Divine nature a field of contemplation at once the most sublime and the most interesting. And such has been the gracious ordering of the counsels of God in this particular, that a reverent contemplation of the Divine character is always attended with an increasing certainty of the truth of Revelation

keeping constant, even pace with that ever-growing love of His perfections which is its more immediate result. Since "the very evidences of the Christian religion have impressions of the divine nature *irradiating* them (as one of our best writers expresses it); and thus they coincide with the system of that religion itself, wherein the Divine Being, in the exercise of these His perfections, is proposed to us as the object of faith, with its consequent affections and duties."

With good reason then speculations on the nature of God ordinarily take precedence of all other points in systems of divinity; and this as well from the intrinsic dignity of the Divine essence, as from the universal disposition of human souls to investigate a subject at once so grand and so affecting. Hardly therefore are the Schoolmen, or the Fathers, whom indeed they followed, to be charged with singularity in this respect. Their attempts to form a perfect theory of the Divine Being may have been, doubtless they were, abortive; but this, it is admitted by all, was not from dearth of mental power of any sort in themselves, as compared with others, but the bare unavoidable result of the intellectual difficulties with which the subject itself is surrounded. They became conscious, as all

must who pursue investigations concerning the divine essence and attributes, of impassable limits set to their powers of metaphysical analysis. It became plain to them that Theology in its first and limited sense, the Science of God, is in truth impossible. If we look to the Trinitarian Controversies in the early ages of the church, or to those which have been maintained by the orthodox against the Socinians of these latter days, the same fact is distinctly observable. The upshot of all such speculations, whensoever they are carried beyond the Word of God, and His own manifestations of Himself therein, presents us only with a choice of intellectual perplexities. Go on as far as we may go in appearance, there is, and ever will be, something beyond which is inscrutable. There are still remaining behind the veil "the deep things of God," which (as the apostle says) "knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God[a]."

II. Observations of a similar kind, it will not be disputed, apply to human nature also. The declaration of the Evangelist that our blessed Lord "[b]knew what was in man," must be read as a strictly *exclusive* proposition. He, and He only knew the depths of that nature which he had himself put on, in order

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. [b] John ii. 25.

to fulfil the gracious purposes of the Father in our behalf. Still we know, and our Lord's instructions assume that we know, *something* of ourselves, and that something *all* that is necessary to be known. Let this self-knowledge then be briefly adverted to.

1. And first we may say upon this point, (but here again not affecting to frame any system of Anthropology,) that man in his natural condition is a being susceptible at least of Faith. But whether or no Faith, or the religious sentiment, be a particular form or modification of reason, say a *weak*, or a *rapid*, or an *irregular* exercise of the Rational faculty, or whether it be something altogether distinct from reason, are points which, after all the discussion which has been, and doubtless will be, expended on them, each individual Christian will have to determine for himself. These questions, in fact, fall within a class of difficulties which, when abstractedly viewed, seem destined to pass down as unsolved problems from every age to its successor; and his must be a sanguine mind which shall anticipate that the reasonings of the most acute or the most profound Divines and Philosophers will do more than assist, and that too but a very small portion of the human race, in coming to right conclusions concerning

them. Accordingly, no solution of these and similar questions respecting the relation of Faith to Reason will be attempted by me, either now or in the further prosecution of my design.

2. Let the possession of Reason and Conscience be added also in our estimate of the original condition of the human mind—but here again, without any entrance upon speculative questions as to the proper nature of these faculties taken separately, or the relations which they bear to each other, and to the whole man. We are, no doubt, at liberty to imagine (if we please) man's original reason to have been in some glorious and ineffable manner united, even identified, with the Divine Nature, seeing that our first parent was created "[c] in the image of God." But flights of speculation on this phrase of Holy Scripture (and they have been most numerous) serve, it is to be feared, but little purposes of real good. The more practical questions may rather engage the attention of the pious mind—Whether, after the loss of its original glory, there are any traces in the human mind of a power of partial self-recovery? If that power exist, is it common to the many, or only the privilege of the

[c] Gen. i. 27. and 1 Cor. xi. 7.

few? How our reason and other faculties stand related, not speculatively, but *practically*, to our faith? What again are our offices with reference to Divine communications, vouchsafed to man under every known dispensation, and under all varieties of his individual and social state? These questions are not only open to us, I say, but they belong to us; and they belong to us not as philosophers, or theorists in religion, which few of us can be, but simply as religious beings, which all of us are. How manifold the views taken on these questions at different periods of the history of civilized and christianized man, and how various the answers which they are even now receiving in this, as well as all other Christian countries, is a reflection that must arise at once in the minds of many who now hear me.

And so with Conscience also. Here too we may *conceive* man's original judgment of right and wrong, of moral good and evil in every shape—to have been once in exact unison with the Divine intelligence. But, indulge our fancy to its utmost bent, and we cannot think of our first parent, even in paradise, otherwise than as of a creature; and the condition of a creature implies superiority in all points, and especially in the

most exalted, on the part of his Creator. The conscience then, whether it amounted in Adam (as some divines have thought) to a perception of every truth of Natural Religion, even before his understanding was specially illumined by direct Divine communications; or whether in this respect his descendants have inherited powers exactly equal to his; however this may be, I say, the faculty of Conscience must at least be conceded to form an important element in the moral and religious constitution of the human being.

To the question that might be put, whether by Reason and Conscience are meant *active*, and not merely *passive* powers, I would answer, Reason clearly so, and Conscience contended to be not only active, but imperious and searching in its very nature, against those who maintain that it only assists us in our apprehension of moral truth, when conveyed into it from some other external source. This is not denying, however, that the *standard* of conscience is and must be external. At the same time, I offer no disclaimer against those subordinate faculties of the mind, to which (as will be seen in the progress of our inquiry) the evidence no less than the substance of religion is addressed. By these I

mean the Imagination, the Affections and Sentiments, each of which contributes its share to the perfection of our nature. The thorough investigation of these falls no doubt within the alien province of psychological research. But even practical religion requires that they should be present and active, the lower being always exercised in due and careful subordination to the higher. And here the greatest caution is necessary. All undue predilections towards these, or indeed towards any of our faculties, leading as they must to the disturbance or enfeeblement of the rest, are direct injuries to the cause of Truth and Holiness; and it is to such partialities, when carried to an extravagant length, that, in point of historical certainty, most of the erroneous opinions which have been entertained on sacred subjects, even in Christian times, have owed their origin. Let us assume then that a proper adjustment of our powers, small as well as great, to their several legitimate spheres of duty, is requisite both for our proficiency in Religious Truth, and for a proper appreciation of its Evidences also.

I have spoken, it will have been observed, of *the perfection of man's nature;* and this renders it necessary to obviate misapprehen-

sion by entering a protest at once against two opposite extremes of opinion upon this point. The first is the notion of man's perfectibility; a fruitful theme in the systems of modern Sophists; but which upon examination is found to be at variance with sound Reason, as much as it is positively contradicted by Scripture. The prediction to the Serpent, recorded in Genesis, has, when taken alone, appeared to some, and these no mean authorities, a sufficient refutation of the theory in question; since the promise therein contained[c], that the Serpent should bruise the heel of the Woman, seems incompatible with the hope that man should ever in the present life be entirely free from sin and danger. But the rejection of the theory does not depend upon this or any other single text of Scripture; since the whole Bible, historically regarded, and supported here most strongly by heathen history as well, presents us with a complete falsification of it in every page. Nor will the doctrine (as I have stated) stand the test of Reason either. The visionary speculations of Continental metaphysicians on this point have been over and over again triumphantly refuted by the more sober reasonings of our own country-

[c] Gen. iii. 15.

men; and it has been abundantly shown by the latter, that the maintenance of such views is utterly inconsistent with the original differences in their intrinsic natures, which both parties profess to recognise as subsisting between God and man.

Nevertheless there *are*, no doubt, senses in which the theologian may regard man as a good and perfect being. Contemplated as a work of God, for instance, he is perfect in his natural endowments, whatever they may be; and by necessary consequence, in his whole nature—that being, we know, the designed effect of the creative effort on the part of God, which never could be defective or short-handed in its operation. But this is no more than the "[d]truth of our nature," of which the Article of our Church speaks, and by which is meant that completeness of essence which constitutes man *very* man; in which sense also our Lord himself is in the same Article stated to have been made "like unto" his brethren. Nor is this mode of explanation to be confined to the case of *Human* nature. "Every creature of God is good," says the Apostle[e]; that is, good *as* a creature, and perfectly qualified to perform its proper and appointed work, but not good (assuredly) in the sense which the ques-

[d] XVth Art. [e] 1 Tim. iv. 4.

tion before us requires, and with which a precipitate and partial spirit of interpretation has not unfrequently sought to invest the epithet. But, glancing once more at the theory of Optimism, I may cheerfully dismiss all discussion of it with the consolatory remark, that the present age, though sufficiently rife (it must be allowed) with schemes of human exaltation, presents itself in this single respect, at least in advantageous contrast with that which immediately preceded it.

Alongside of this Philosophical reverie lies the not uncommon, but not less dangerous error of those divines who are wont to ascribe a condition of sinless perfection to the regenerate, without regard had to their works. This theory, whether with Irenæus we date it as far back as Simon Magus, or take it to have first invited condemnation in his own time, has existed in all ages of the church, and is a distinguishing tenet of many professing Christians in the present day. I shall be allowed, however, in this general sketch to rest its refutation upon the reiterated declarations of the "Good Apostle;" who over and over and over again, we observe, connects the practice of righteousness with the prerogative of the believer's sonship. "[f] Whosoever is born of God doth not commit

[f] 1 John iii. 9-10.

sin," says St. John; and afterwards, in order, as it would seem, to give the fullest possible force to the assurance by a conversion of the proposition, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." The theory in question might surely vanish before words so pointedly expressive;—conveying a simple and (if I may so say) a natural doctrine in terms thus positive, and, one would have thought, unmistakeable.

But if, on the other hand, we should adopt certain representations of the nature of man which meet with the concurrence of another considerable section of the religious world, it would seem a mockery almost to address a being of such hopeless and utter depravity, and in the language of St. Paul bid him "[g] work out his own salvation." The liberty of man which is undeniably in some degree appealed to in the apostolical injunction, if it survive at all the mutilations of the unmerciful theory alluded to, does not really deserve the name of liberty; and the *actions*, improperly indeed so called, which it originates, are not only performed in direct counteraction of the will of God, but indicate and imply a want of consciousness of the very power which they oppose. We know well that men under the most favorable aspect of their nature

[g] Philipp. ii. 12.

are constantly found in hostility to God. Yet they are commonly sensible of their sin, and often strive to overcome their evil propensities. But in the system to which I now advert, the human being is in a state even worse than that of total imbecility, as respects the impulses and calls to faith and obedience. The dispositions of the soul are not merely perverted, but they are intrinsically vicious and sinful altogether. Every particle of good of which they are susceptible comes from without, and is a positively alien, and almost unamalgamating element. Such a hypothesis, known under the name of the ultra-Calvinistic, if we carry it to its necessary consequences, degrades man below the dignity of a truly rational creature, and, as respects any real value attaching to his religious capacity, sinks him below the devils spoken of in [h]Scripture, to whom a certain sort of faith is attributed, although we read that they believe only to tremble before the awful majesty of God.

III. A third view must not pass entirely unnoticed. It has been sought by both assailants and defenders of Revelation, to lay the foundations of Religion as well as Ethics in something external both to God and man. Various modes have prevailed at different

[h] James ii. 19.

times of representing this external element. But there has been no dispute at all, or very little, as to its supposed influence—that influence having been uniformly represented to consist in the disposition and control of the Divine mind, and through it, or beside it, the will of man also. The theory seems to me, I confess, a lingering reminiscence, held in most cases perhaps unconsciously, of Plato's *ideas* — the third ingredient, as most of us are aware, in the system of the universe, as conceived by that great philosopher. What I mean is, that abstract notions of expediency, fitness, reasonableness, beauty, and the like, are posited as eternal and immutable verities, and these are said to sway and in all cases to determine the will of God, and thus to be ultimate principles of both Religion and Morality. In the times of Scholasticism, the question to which these notions returned the supposed legitimate answer assumed the daring form; "What determines the will of God?" Subsequently, the Deists and Freethinkers of all sorts eagerly availed themselves of the theory, bestowing on it the name of "fitness of things," or some other equivalent designation. Wheresoever the hypothesis met with acquiescence, it followed that if any thing were shewn not to quadrate

exactly with these abstract notions, it clearly could not be allowed to have the sanction of the Divine approbation, and consequently was not entitled to any place in the system of religious belief. It is perhaps to be lamented, that many sincere advocates of Revelation have thought right to countenance this mode of talking—influenced often perhaps by an early familiarity with systems of ethics, and theories of moral obligation, constructed, whether studiously or otherwise, without any reference to the dictates of Revelation. But surely the safer and sounder view is that which would regard the conceptions of which I am speaking, as actual part and parcel of the human mind, and consequently "gifts of God to us," comprehended in the one great original gift of our true nature. It might further be argued, that to constitute such conceptions, or any other in fact, the rules and arbiters of God's will, amounts to the reversal of all philosophical order, since it is a recognition of something anterior to Him,—of attributes and qualities existing before the one sole Creator of all things, mental as well as physical, ideal as well as actual. But a still graver charge may be made against the theory. For upon its admission the Deity, it is plain, might be altogether dispensed with in our

views of religious and moral obligation, and man, by the force of those recognitions, work out his happiness and salvation in total independence of the Divine Authority. What is this, we may well ask, but "arrogancy and impiety?"

I have said that I discern a resemblance between this theory and the well-known system of the great disciple of Socrates. It may possibly however have arisen merely from an analogy conceived to subsist between the cases of an earthly and a heavenly Ruler. Of the extent to which we are governed by such analogies, it is difficult to speak too strongly. The relation of God to man is familiarly likened to that of a king to his subjects. But as in every constitutional monarchy there is something above the monarch to which he himself either expressly or impliedly owes allegiance, viz. the Laws of the Constitution—so it may have been conceived that in the case of the universe, the sphere and domain of the heavenly rule were to be recognised as lying within these "eternal fitnesses and relations," represented therefore to be, like the Law in the supposed parallel of king and subject, as binding upon God himself as upon his creatures. That this is an instance of over-strained analogy might,

if time allowed, easily be shewn. I must be permitted however to dismiss the theory with the words of a late distinguished prelate of our Church, who thus observes upon Cudworth's attempt to base morality upon these eternal relations.—"The radical and insuperable objection to all theories of morals considered as independent of the revealed will of God, is that they suppose us capable of discerning and fully comprehending these eternal fitnesses and relations, which, as they originated in the will of the Creator, and are subject to his will, can be fully known only by Him, and are discernible by others in such measure only as He shall see fit to disclose them." It was thus that Bishop Van Mildert commented upon the theory in its application to morality. Let us be permitted to extend the observation to religion also.

Nor shall I, as I trust, incur your censure for omitting to remark upon the doctrines of Free-Will and Predestination, closely connected as they are with the subjects which have been now compendiously brought before us. The importance of the discussions on these points also has perhaps been very much overrated. In so far as they afford matter for *speculation*, probably many of us are of opinion that they are fairly exhausted. And

we may deal very shortly indeed with them as practical questions; for the whole Gospel Dispensation falls to the ground, if man be supposed not to possess those capacities which fit him to be a party to an express covenant with God; and freedom of Will, a freedom sufficient to qualify him as a moral agent, "apt to discern good and evil, and choosing which of the two he pleases," is undeniably one of those capacities. Hence to disown Free Will in this sense (which is the only sense indeed that Religion requires) is, according to Waterland, to "err fundamentally."

Let the admission of these simple and very general principles be deemed necessary, in order that they may serve as guides and landmarks (as it were) in our future reasonings. Without knowing the principles upon which the proof proceeds, and the faculties employed in the process, as well as the matter we have to prove, all reasoning must be more or less unsatisfactory. To revert for a moment only to Reason. Scholasticism, we know, corrupted Reason; Papal Rome stifled, and is still striving to stifle it; Enthusiasts of all sorts are fain and prompt to deride and despise it. Yet who amongst *us* can or would gainsay its being one of our characteristic

powers, for the right employment of which we lie under a heavy and unalienable responsibility?

Nevertheless, let Reason and all our other faculties be valued according to the exact measure of their several merits. What the learned have observed on the course of Ecclesiastical History generally, and on the case of Biblical Interpretation in particular, is generally true also in the workings of individual minds upon religious subjects. Authority has been first paramount, next has come the free exercise of reason and private judgment, which again has often given place to the flights and vagaries of the imagination. But all our powers have their just and useful spheres of jurisdiction. The difficulty is to keep them within their proper limits. And this difficulty is perhaps greatest, where, as in the Evidences of Religion, it is frequently so hard to distinguish the aids afforded by the Spirit of God Himself from the independent, substantive operation of our own mental faculties.

If further apology were needful, it might be found in the prevalence of infidelity in the world, after and despite of all that has been written in counteractionof this deplorable deformity of the human mind. "But it

is the peculiar property of Infidelity to forget its own defeats." Easy would it be to frame a catena of complaints and denunciations of infidelity, from the writings of eminent historians and divines extending uninterruptedly from the Reformation to the present hour. How it came to pass that, after the great check which unbelief sustained at that glorious epoch in the world's history, it was enabled to raise its head again, is a problem of no difficult solution. I now speak only of the fact, without endeavouring to account for it. The sources of scepticism, infidelity and misbelief, are *indeed* multitudinous; and they are so for this simple reason, because the minds of men, when they come to the age of reflection, are so differently stored and moulded. What has been said this morning will have suggested, at least, that these states are not to be accounted natural developments of the human soul. There may be, I admit, a comparative aptitude in the original constitution of some minds, a *φυσικὴ κακία*, (so to say,) which issues under fostering circumstances in these lamentable states; and among such circumstances may be reckoned, if we choose, things the most opposite to each other in their nature and *prima facie* tendencies. Thus learn-

ing, especially the study of mathematics, and the neglect of learning, the doctrines and principles of Popery, those again of the Reformation, sickness, exuberant health, nay, prosperity and adversity in general, have all been accused, and perhaps with some justice, of having been the means or occasions of bringing men into these deplorable conditions. In what senses this is and is not so, presents again no very perplexing problem to the student of human nature. But amidst all the diversities of thinking and talking, there is one point on which all are agreed, that *impurity of living* is the most effectual as it is also the most general of the predisposing causes of unbelief. This truth is too frequently and emphatically dwelt upon from this place, for me to do more than connect it with the leading ideas already suggested by my text.

"The Divine nature" (says Gregory of Nyssa), "whatsoever it be besides (for we cannot understand it), is goodness, holiness, power, glory, purity, eternity. Who is he then may safely say to him, My Father?—If one whose conscience is branded with foul sins shall before repentance claim kindred of God, and being unjust and filthy, say to that pure and holy one, My Father! his

mouth (whilst he repeats his Paternoster) vents no prayers, but contumelious slanders against God."……Or to cite a higher, because an *inspired* teacher[a], "If ye call him Father, which without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" This fear, we may rest assured, is the end as well as the beginning of wisdom.

It remains for me to state more specifically the subject of the ensuing Lectures. A way having been made by the foregoing remarks for the consideration of the Christian Evidences, the next Lecture will contain some general views on that important subject. There will then follow the delineation of those branches of Evidence which appeal most directly to the understanding, and which may be styled, if we please, the *Rational* Element of the Evidences for Revealed Truth. As falling under this head, I shall proceed to review the mass of facts which bear directly and indirectly upon Religion, and which for distinction's sake let us call the *Historical* Element. The notice of Evidences thus considered as addressing the Rational faculty in its unsanctified state having been terminated, I shall next call

[a] 1 Pet. i. 17.

attention to those proofs which recommend themselves to the same faculty, when under the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God. Occasion will be thus afforded to speak of the Testimony of the Spirit generally, an internal evidence of a different kind from that at which we have already glanced, as arising from the natural powers of man only; and one, the efficiency of which it is manifestly impossible to over-estimate. Let this be called for distinction's sake, although the designation be obviously inadequate—the *Spiritual* Element. The contemplation of this all-powerful constituent in the structure of Faith having brought all our views of the Evidences addressed to *Reason* to a close, I shall pass on to the notice of the support to be gathered to the cause of Revelation from the imaginative powers of the human soul, and which constitute, as it were, the *Poetical* Element of the great subject before us. An opportunity will thus occur of stating summarily the aids which both Religion and its Evidences undoubtedly receive from the action of the inferior powers of the human soul in general. It must be obvious to my present hearers that a very brief survey of provinces so various and extensive will exhaust the time which shall be then remain-

ing at our disposal. An attempt to condense the various proofs which flow in from so many tributary sources to swell the flood of Christian evidence, and to rivet (as it were) more closely the connexion which may have all along been seen to subsist between them, will bring the entire task which I have proposed to myself to its conclusion.

As respects the difficulties which we shall encounter, or of the existence and magnitude of which (in many cases) we shall at least become sensible, when traversing a field so vast and intricate, I will not further tax your patience by more than making the briefest allusion to them. Nor shall I offer any apology for having made selection of a subject so general, or for my treatment of it in a manner necessarily open to objections, if not on many other grounds, at any rate by reason of that very generality itself. An avowal simply and honestly made of my settled belief that such general views may be beneficially presented to a mixed Academical Auditory on occasions like the present, is perhaps all that will be required to conciliate your minds to the undertaking. Let the design itself, or its execution, or both, be ever so uninteresting, nay even distasteful to many, the statement of truths however

long established, and of arguments however trite in the estimation of the proficient in Theology, I cannot but deem serviceable to those amongst us, who, amid their other learning, are and must be learning (whether they know it or not) both *what* and *how* they are to think upon that most important of all their studies—the Doctrines of their early Faith. The wisest too, it may be presumed, will hear in an indulgent spirit the recital of arguments and incentives to Faith and Piety, with which they have been long familiar, and the real value of which they are themselves most competent to discern. But if in the case of *any* the hope should turn out to be well-grounded, that Truth—which every inquiry into evidence is intended to subserve—Truth, by which I here mean not Theological Truth, but that far higher and nobler sort of Truth which we emphatically call Religious;—if Religious Truth, I say, shall by the blessing of its Divine Author be brought nearer to the hearts and consciences of any of us, and (which is in such a case a direct and necessary consequence) the *Love* of that Truth shall display itself in time to come in a better, more earnest, less intermitted study of the Word and Will of God—that Word and that Will appearing to

be surely and enduringly made accessible upon anysoever grounds of Evidence which may pass in review before us—I shall not have altogether missed my aim and object. I shall have more than realized all the expectations which in my most sanguine moments I may have ventured to entertain.

May He then who is alone our guide "[a] into all Truth" shed his Blessing both upon my humble endeavours, and upon your sympathies! And may the same Holy Being be present to enlighten, aid, comfort, sustain, perfect each and all of us in every our aspiration after "righteousness and true holiness," to the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost one God, world without end.

[a] 1 John xvi. 13. Eph. iv. 24.

SERMON II.

PSALM XLVIII. 11.

Walk about Sion, and go round about her; and tell the towers thereof.

THE observations contained in the former Lecture may have led us to anticipate, that as men are severally gifted with different faculties and endowments, so are they likely to affix a greater value on this or that species of Proof over others; preferring often, and, we may suppose, under the influence of a very natural and therefore venial self-love, such Evidence as may be most congenial to their own individual characters and capacities. The majority of mankind accordingly are observed to cling to certain branches or modes of Proof in religious questions, whilst they undervalue, or even positively reject all the rest. From the Atheist, who alone rejects all, up to the most confirmed and enlightened believer in the

Christian Revelation, there exist, in fact, infinite gradations and varieties of conviction, attributable, no doubt, in great measure to the different conditions and circumstances of those who entertain them; since every man has originally a bias towards one or other extreme of credulity or incredulity (as our older Divines express it); and this disposition is sure to be strengthened or weakened by numberless influences, brought to bear upon him, both directly and indirectly, as life advances. Hence it becomes extremely difficult, however much we may desire to do so, not only to estimate with certainty the *absolute* effect of any sort of Evidence, but even to ascertain its effect upon the mind of any given individual. Nor, even supposing the latter to be in our power, would the effect apparently produced in any case be a sure criterion of the strength or weakness of our reasoning; inasmuch as we cannot command the self-knowledge or candour of men, any more than we are able at will to remove or remodel their predispositions. Those who embrace the desired conclusion will sometimes be forward to extol unduly the merits of an argument to the force of which they may not really have been indebted for their conviction; whilst those

who shut their minds against conviction will be apt to justify themselves at the expense of the argument, (whatever its absolute value may be,) rather than plead guilty to want of perception or prejudice in themselves.

To take an instance. Many persons, I have no doubt, profess to believe in Christianity, and to think, feel, and act as Christians, being persuaded of the truth of their Religion from the mere fact of its *continuance in the world*.—To others again, neither this fact, nor the persuasion of their fellow-men, which is built upon it, appears to carry in it the slightest particle of reasonable inducement. What now is to be said of both these classes? Shall we dispose of them summarily with the remark that the one class owing to prejudice over-estimates an argument, to the real force of which, whatever it be, the other by reason of an equal amount of prejudice is utterly insensible? Or may we not rather say, disregarding altogether the *effects* of the argument in either case, and dealing with it absolutely, that it is both logical and just to reason with the mass of mankind from the continuance of Christianity to the continuance of its Evidences? The argument, it might be objected, applies to every system or institution which may, *de facto*, maintain its

footing in the world. But it tells, we must reply, with peculiar force in the case to which we should thus be applying it; and this for the simple reason that the precepts of the Gospel are in such direct hostility to the unruly wills and affections of sinful men—"For who" (says a popular writer on the Evidences of Revelation) "who can deny that the uncompromising holiness of the Gospel arms against it all the corruptions of our nature?" When this is the case, it is hardly to be doubted that somewhere or other there must exist very strong Evidence indeed to account for the maintenance and perpetuation of such a religious system as the Christian, if indeed it be not actually startling to our mere reason, that faith should to any extent be "[b]found on the earth." The *prima facie* and introductory argument, when considered absolutely, is of no little value, which thus makes the existence of the *end* a security for the existence of the *means;* for in this relation to each other do truth and evidence admit of being presented.

Nor need we be concerned overmuch because the proposition cannot be maintained in its converse shape; in other words, because the continuance of the proofs of a religious system afford (speculatively at least)

[b] Luke xviii. 8.

no safe guarantee for the continuance of the system itself. This I say, needs give us, my brethren, no anxiety; for we know well that *practically*, as long as human nature shall remain the same as it is and has been, some, and these not a few among mankind, are sure to be at all times interested in understanding and appreciating the evidences of the Gospel. And of this we might assure ourselves upon grounds of reason and expediency only, supposing holy Scripture to have been altogether silent on the subject. But so far from this being the case, the Scriptures not only declare the completeness of the Gospel Evidences, but also impose their study as a duty incumbent on every Christian man. To "[c]prove all things," to "[d]be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear," and similar injunctions, are familiar to every reader of the New Testament; and we can perceive that they are to be understood as though they had been immediately addressed to all the disciples of Christ of every age. Whatever then the effect of the single argument adverted to upon the minds of different men may be, we seem justified, as well by Holy Scripture as by reason, in connecting (in an argumen-

[c] 1 Thess. v. 21. [d] 1 Pet. iii. 15.

tative point of view) the duration of the Christian Evidences with the unintermitted continuance of the profession of the Christian faith in the world.

In like manner other instances might be adduced, tending to exemplify in a more striking manner the difference between the *absolute* and *relative* value and effect of evidence;—a difference to be set down by us as one of the evils inseparable from our probationary state, and only to be reconciled in that day when the evidence of faith itself, so complex and various, and even precarious as it is upon earth, shall be turned into that of actual sight, to Him who "overcometh[e], and is set down together with Christ in his throne" in the heavens.

And here also I may venture to introduce the caution which every student of revealed Truth should receive against a too hasty indulgence of *expectations* of higher sorts or degrees of evidence than the matter in question on each occasion may either warrant or admit of. But on this point I shall simply remind you of the well-known rule of Chillingworth, who bids us be content, in all questions of Christian Truth and its Evidences, with such a degree of assurance as is

[e] Rev. iii. 24.

sufficient to produce obedience. God's Spirit, he adds, may, if he please, work more—"a certainty of adherence, beyond a certainty of Evidence"—but to this the ordinary Christian cannot be confident of attaining.

If indeed we could find one perfect human mind in the adult condition,—by which I mean one that had reached its maturity without any impediment or hinderances to its growth in Intellectual and Spiritual graces, (arising whether from neglect, from evil or injudicious education, false reasoning, improper indulgences, or any other cause,)—then we should perhaps discern that Revealed Religion addresses itself with a power of conviction (though not the same power) to every one of our mental faculties without exception. But such a being as is now supposed—like a perfectly pure and perfectly holy Church upon earth, which is indeed only the same idea in an enlarged and complex form—is the mere phantom of our volition. As men generally, nay universally, are found to be, the case is as I have already stated it; and so, according to their mental constitutions, (however these may have been determined,) men do and will resist or yield to this or that kind of persuasion; some indeed being swayed by their Reason, but

others again equally, or perhaps more so, by their imaginations, or by their feelings, or by sentimental impulses of even a lower grade, down, it may be, to the most irrational and extravagant suggestions of self-delusion and caprice. Hence it is partly, and partly it may be presumed also from a desire to exalt our notions with regard to the evidences of Religion, that divines have for the most part contended that the appeal should be here made to the *intellect* exclusively;—many of them going so far indeed as to affirm that all rejections and perversions whatsoever of religious proof—all the diverse expedients in short, which have been employed in self-defence by Infidelity, Superstition, and Fanaticism, are traceable to an undue interference, habitual or occasional, with the rational faculty on the part of some other of the mental powers.

Without presuming either to gainsay or to uphold the correlation thus asserted to exist between the intellectual powers of man, and the subject of religious proof, I purpose, nevertheless, to assign the first place in the order of specific consideration to that branch of evidences which is commonly supposed to fall immediately within the cognizance of the rational faculty.

But before I proceed to such consideration of the different kinds of evidence as the limits of these Lectures may allow, it will be well to eliminate the sorts of proof which appear, if not inadmissible altogether, at least unsafe to insist upon in the conduct of our defence of the Christian faith.

I. The first of these is Demonstration. If Christianity admitted of demonstration in the strict sense, it would seem to follow that repeated inquiries into its evidences would be, to a great extent, superfluous. But neither supposition nor statement, in this proposition, is true. Whenever we read, with an appropriate candour, such argumentative defences of the faith as have been entitled, "*Demonstrations* of true religion," "*Demonstrations* of the attributes of God," and the like, we discover in them (be the nature of our impressions beforehand what they may) nothing like the sort of proof to which the schools or mathematicians properly confine the term. I am far from asserting that some of the works to which I allude do not establish to the convictions of some minds a *certainty* of the conclusions at which they arrive, which they themselves deem to be the necessary result of a truly *demonstrative* process. But, be this as it may, we are to

remember that although there can be no demonstration without certainty, yet there may be abundant certainty without demonstration. It will not perhaps be disputed, that the nearest seeming approach to the latter is where the objects of the reasoning are the Being and Attributes of God. Yet even these instances are not to be excepted from our remark. At all events, attempts to demonstrate the distinctive truths of Christianity are generally allowed, in our own country at least, to have been attended with signal failure; and it seems now to be the settled judgment of those who have thought most and most deeply on the subject, that the Christian apologist of this advanced period of human enlightenment should relinquish entirely such proud designations of his reasoning efforts as we are now considering; however natural the desire (a desire very probably transmitted down from the Aristotelian period of ecclesiastical history) to invest the faith with the most cogent, and, as was thought, the only satisfactory kind of proof.

I shall insert one reflexion only, the direct tendency of which is, it will be allowed, towards the elimination for which I am contending. The obvious, yet truly stupendous fact, that the evidence of Christianity is a

growing evidence; or, in other words, that Christianity keeps even pace with the steady onward march of time; the operation of its laws and spirit (not to speak now of the fulfilment of its abundant promises and predictions) presenting itself ever side by side with the fleeting occurrences of each successive age, and no less imparting than receiving testimony, sure and fast as every event discloses itself to view;—this mighty fact alone furnishes to many a reflecting mind a key, and the master key, for the right understanding of its proofs. But here manifestly there is no demonstration, if we mean (with Leibnitz) what is proved "by a metaphysical necessity, and in an incontestable way." Nevertheless, there is an amount of certainty, which, if honestly weighed, is fully equal to any that attaches to the condition of truth absolutely demonstrated. And it has this further, and by no means insignificant advantage, that a lively and continuous interest is thus excited in the study of the evidences of Revelation. Let us think but for a moment of the effect produced upon pious minds by the single element of unfulfilled prophecy, and ourselves, our own times and their history, every thing of note which may fall within the scope of our per-

sonal observation and experience, becomes part and parcel of this single branch of evidence for the eternal veracity of the Gospel. It is thus that one only, and that a very limited aspect of the evidence, secures for the entire subject a degree of never-ceasing novelty. Did Christianity, on the contrary, resemble a thing that might be written, folded up, and laid aside like an instrument signed, sealed, and delivered, or a problem once and once for all demonstrated, how different would the case be then! The interest which we now cannot but take in its evidences would be in a great measure destroyed, its resemblance to all other practical institutions effaced, and its adoption or rejection might be left, in a manner that it cannot now be, to chance or the phantasies of individuals. Little indeed would be the likelihood in such a case (humanly viewed, at least) of its retaining any firm hold upon the hearts and affections of men; hopeless the realization of those assurances with which Holy Scripture abounds, of its unintermitted duration and influences; frustrate that solemn promise of its Divine Author himself, that it should abide with us "alway, even unto the end of the world[r]." The inference resulting

[r] Matth. xxviii. 21.

at once from this single reflexion would seem to be conclusive against the *demonstrability* of the Christian scheme. For demonstration is both independent of time, and unsusceptible of accessions;—maxims which (if we do not disdain so scholastic a mode of disposing of the question) must peremptorily and altogether exclude the evidences referred to from the limits of demonstration.

II. Pursuing our course of elimination, we should next exclude the argument from signs or notes, whenever it may be sought to invest it with the weight and dignity of absolute Demonstration. If the notes or signs are in reality of the essence of the point in question; or, in other words, if the *sign* in a given case be comprehended in the conception of the thing signified, the argument is of that *identical* character which was possessed by the cases of demonstration before rejected. In order to be properly marks or tokens, whatever may be advanced for such must be separable (in idea, at least) from that which is contended to be betokened by them. This primary distinction did not escape the keen-sighted controversialists on either side at the era of the Reformation. Nor were the other properties of the argument unobserved by the same parties, although some writers both

then and since are chargeable with having overlooked them, or, it may be, with having purposely passed them by in silence. It may be well to occupy a short time in stating my meaning somewhat more clearly.

The argument from signs needs be no farther described on an occasion like the present than by the notice of two only of its conditions: 1. In the first place the sign, and that of which it is the sign, must be, as has already been intimated, clearly distinguishable from each other;—and 2dly, in order to be distinctive and of argumentative force, it must be (in the reasoner's employment of it) *anterior* to the thing signified.

That the argument from signs is in general attended with much uncertainty will at once be admitted; since even in the case of the material universe, where it would strike us to be most frequently available, we are assured by those whose researches into Nature have been most successful, that the sagacity of man, when supplied with all the helps of modern ingenuity and discovery, has yet advanced but a little way towards an accurate discrimination between the essence and its indications. How much less then can we defer with an implicit submission to the argument from signs, where the groundwork

and the application of it are merely analogous; viz. when we transfer ourselves to religious questions, which are obviously removed for the most part from the direct and (comparatively) trustworthy operations of the Senses!—But I proceed to instance in the important argument to which I have already made allusion.

In the attempts then to determine the true Church of Christ, what, it may be asked, has been the procedure of the disputants of our own Church and that of Rome? As respects our present consideration, have not Protestants been repeatedly confronted by the so-called Demonstration of Bellarmine—an argument clearly and avowedly constructed of an elaborate accumulation of signs? "Antiquity," "Duration," "Uninterrupted succession of Bishops," and many other *notes* down (or as some of the Romanists will have it, *up*) to the note of the name "*Catholic*," have been over and over again put forward by one of the contending parties as conclusive on their own side of the question. Occasionally, no doubt, these notes have been claimed by ourselves also, although for the most part, I believe, they have been some or all of them conceded by Protestant writers to their opponents. It is, we may readily assure our-

selves, a gratuitous injustice done to our own cause to concede them, and we ought not therefore to do so. But what is the consequence in an argumentative point of view, if we do? Surely it would be absurd to say that we thereby granted that the case had been *demonstrated* against us. We must on the contrary maintain that the *notes* adduced, being but notes or signs, are not of the essence of the thing signified, and that the reasonings founded upon them (whether those reasonings be ours or theirs) can consequently at the best rise no higher than to the level of probable reasonings. It is then (and then only) when you have arrived at the essentials, strictly so called, of a thing, that you can produce a *demonstration*, the non-essential properties amounting in every case to no more than grounds of Probability.

Hence it follows that we can freely accord the fullest measure of justice to Bellarmine by allowing great logical force to his reasonings on behalf of the claims of his own communion. But we must never estimate his great argument in his book on the "Notes of the Church" as any thing beyond a cumulative argument of probability possessing exactly the amount of proof supplied by the several contributions of each note when summed up

and taken collectively. And undoubtedly, were the inducements arising out of the fifteen different sources from whence his argument is drawn each of ascertained weight and validity, and all of them moreover shewn to exist in the case of the Church of Rome exclusively, then the reasoning of their great champion would be (as the Papists have generally professed to think it) "triumphant:" yet observe, not even then amounting to the triumph of a positive *demonstration.* But unfortunately for their cause, the most important of the notes are in reality as much the property of other churches competing with the Romish for the perfections of Holiness and Catholicity; whilst the others again crumble to pieces at the severe touch of critical scrutiny;—and the whole fabric is at once swept clean away, if we meet the Romish principle that the True Faith is only known from a previous knowledge of the True Church, by its more tenable direct converse, and insist on our side that it is impossible to know the True Church unless the True Faith shall have itself been ascertained previously.

It must be admitted, however, that some of the supporters of Bellarmine's argument have been quite ready to allow that the sign in every case must be a non-essential; and

these reasoners are therefore not, in fairness, chargeable with exalting the argument, in this respect at least, unduly. And further, they have with equal candour acknowledged the second requirement before noticed, confessing that the real gist of the question lies in the settlement of what is *prior* and what *posterior* in the mental view, or argumentative procedure. But these again, tenacious of their desired conclusion, and bent at all hazards upon establishing it, have been fain to take refuge in the old Peripatetic distinction between what is conceived to be known first *in the order of nature*, and what is first known *to us*, affirming with scholastic propriety that the true faith, being of the essence of the true Church, must necessarily precede it in order;—meaning, if they wish the statement to be granted, in the *natural* order. Having assumed this as the groundwork of the argument, they proceed with undeniable acuteness to infer that Faith, because essential to the Church, is "the less known for this very reason;" inasmuch as it is further removed from, and therefore less known *to us*, and by necessary corollary incapable of being adduced in the shape of a datum or premiss in our reasonings. And here, having completed their fallacy, they stop. They do

not, because they cannot, shew that relatively to us the case may not be, as we assert it actually is, reversed. They are prudently silent as to the additional truth which we have it in our power to urge, and which alone is needed to give consistency and completeness to the protestant argument;—this additional truth being, I need hardly remind you, that God has in his written word made known *to us* the Essential as well as the Non-essential. He has, in short, as we contend, by giving and preserving to us the Bible, placed us in a condition wherein we need not, when instituting in a proper spirit our researches after Divine Truth, be at a loss for the true faith, and in our perplexity be driven to have recourse to any *visible infallible interpreter* on earth;—which is, as their opponents are well aware, all that the Romanists really mean by the Church Catholic throughout the whole controversy.

On the single note of *miracles* something will be said in the subsequent part of our inquiry. But if remarks such as I have now ventured to make are just, when applied to the aggregate argument of Bellarmine himself, it may be useful for us all to consider them in their application to the instances (which are numerous) of the revival or repe-

tition of it in fragmentary forms which meet us in the present day.

I may observe lastly on this branch of my subject, that the well-known dictum of Vincentius of Lirins (which has been so often pressed into the service of controversy) is, if I mistake not, the product of a very intelligible desire to give a sort of demonstrative character to the teaching of the Church, as apart from the teaching of the written Word of God. It is certainly unfair to represent this doctrine as a mere truism; although in its literal sense one cannot deny that it admits of being so designated. We should view it rather as a pseudo-axiomatic principle propounded with the view of equalling religious to other but alien truth in its capacity of strictly scientific development. By the professed *universality* and *ubiquity*, involved in the dictum, it was probably intended to match the same ideas, if not those also of *eternity* and *per-se-ity*, (to speak in terms of art,) which were the properties of all the principles of demonstration as recognised in the scholastic period. In this point of view, however, I may confidently assert, that this celebrated maxim has been tried and found wanting at every season of calm and sober theological discussion. In other words, arguments con-

ducted upon the supposition of a sure test being thereby afforded of the purity or certainty of disputed doctrines, have invariably left the matters in question exactly in the condition in which they found them.

And so convinced, it is matter of historical fact, was the church of Rome herself of the invalidity of such maxims and such lines of argumentation as have now been noticed, that as soon as the reason of men began to exhibit the natural and inevitable symptoms of a re-awakened energy, she had recourse at once to a principle which might abundantly compensate for the insufficiency of them all. Hence her doctrine of implicit submission to authority—that is to say, her own ; an expedient devised with all her accustomed sagacity by one who hath been always in the main "wise in her generation," and which certainly, if judged of from its own confident aspect and bearing, seems to offer the only refuge for those who cannot endure suspense in religious questions, but aspire after a degree of assurance on points of acknowledged doubt and difficulty, withholden (as we think) from man in the counsels of his all-wise and bountiful Creator.

But to proceed to the matter more immediately proposed for our consideration. What

has been now said will doubtless have reminded many of the customary division of arguments both for and against Revelation into reasonings *a priori* and reasonings *a posteriori*. These designations I would studiously retain, as they constitute incontestably the two grand *methods* of presenting systematic truth to the cognizance and operations of the rational faculty. Our business will lie for some time with the former, that is, the *a priori* branch.

It may be sufficient with reference to the sequel to describe the argument in the briefest manner, by simply contrasting it with all arguments arising directly from facts, regard being had, however, and as matter of course, to the eliminations already premised. The arguments in question, will, with these postulates, be restricted to the range of probable evidence only.

Nor must it be forgotten throughout the inquiry, that Holy Scripture has, in the judgment at least of many learned writers, fully warranted the classification of arguments now admitted. Whether in the text from St. Peter before cited, the words "with meekness and fear[a]" were designed to be expressive of the qualities of the Christian apologist, or

[a] 1 Pet. iii. 15.

of those of his opponent, the procedure enjoined is in either case one of reason; a *rational* answer is to be rendered by the Christian always to rational questions and objections. St. Paul too, we must remember, calls the religion itself "a reasonable service[b]." To these and many similar passages of Scripture we may appeal, as authorizing every sober and legitimate exercise of our reasoning powers; and although the tenor of the Apostle's own argumentation, and of that of our blessed Lord Himself, whenever He condescends to reason, presents us, it must be admitted, with a preponderance of reasonings from facts, we nevertheless sometimes encounter examples of the *a priori* mode of reasoning also.

Upon this point I am aware that I differ in some degree from one of the greatest authorities in modern times on the subject to which these remarks are applicable. I cannot think with him that when our Lord said to the Jews, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right[c]?" he meant to exclude from their thoughts and line of reasoning whatever natural notions of the wisdom and other attributes of the Divine mind we may suppose them to have possessed. His appeal

[b] Rom. xii. 1. [c] Luke xii. 27.

was, no doubt, in the first instance to "the law" and "the testimony" of which they were the witnesses and keepers; but surely not so as that they should be oblivious or uncognizant of those impressions, which they might obtain from other sources, of the necessary or probable manifestations of the will and counsels of God. It may be a just remark, that our Lord and his Apostles seldom employed this kind of reasoning. But a sufficient explanation of this (supposing it to be true to a greater extent than I have yet allowed) is afforded by the circumstance, that their main business was to be the heralds and preachers of *facts* to the world. The works which they did, and the lives which they led, were to be the grand objects presented by them to that chosen generation, to which was vouchsafed in the ordering of the Divine counsels the privilege of beholding the one, and forming an immediate estimate of the other. But we must not think that the observation and judgment of the eyewitnesses of the Gospel phenomena, so to speak, were to be exercised in isolation from those convictions and impulses which might be entertained by them previously, with reference to the course of the Divine dispensations, whether in their own or any other age.

And this we may assert to be the case, if we confine the remonstrance of our Lord to the auditory which he was immediately addressing. But it is, we know, in conformity with the analogy which pervades our common expositions of such addresses, when proceeding from the lips of our Lord and his inspired followers, to suppose the lesson which it conveys to be applicable, not merely to the Jews, but also to the successive generations of His disciples throughout all time. With this extension of the appeal, we may understand that all just and really tenable convictions and principles of which the "wise and prudent[d]," properly so called, may be or become sensible, are to be accounted amongst the things, be they new or old, which "every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven[e]" must be able to bring forth out of his treasure-house. The difference between the Jew and Gentile in our Lord's day was, in this respect, just this. The Gentile was thrown upon the sort of extra-scriptural convictions and impressions of which I have been speaking;—how he obtained them, and whether they had been diminished or augmented in the lapse of ages, are collateral questions;—and upon these he was thrown

[d] Matth. xi. 25. [e] Matth. xiii. 52.

entirely for the construction of a rational religion; whereas the Jew, who was more fitly represented by the scribe in the parable, possessed all the additional stores of knowledge which a special Revelation had extended to his countrymen, and thus superadded to the uncertain and imperfect maxims of Gentile reasoning the incontrovertible data which are implied in the very nature and notion of any communication known to proceed from God.

But even supposing that to argue so as to comprise the Gentile as well as the Jew were to miss altogether the point of our Lord's instruction in this passage, we need only look to other parts of Holy Scripture and we shall find ample grounds to justify the employment of the reasoning in question. How, for example, are we to understand the Apostle when he writes of the "[f]invisible things of God from the creation of the world being clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead," unless we believe that this knowledge which he ascribes to the Roman converts constituted an antecedent fund of thought and information, which they were to bring to bear upon the doctrines that he himself was

[f] Rom. i. 20.

teaching them? True, they had dimmed the light that was in them, and for the most part "become vain in their imaginations;" but yet they were somehow or other "sure (the Apostle says in the next chapter) that the judgment of God," the rendering to every man according to his deeds, "is against them that commit such things" as those whereof they were guilty.—Nor can we read the accounts of the same Apostle's conference with the worshippers of "[g] the Unknown God," without obtaining assurance that the existence of antecedent probabilities, or presumptions, as they may be called, was a point assumed by him when conferring with Gentile as well as with Jew. Nor again would it be perhaps a false interpretation of passages occurring in the Epistle[h] wherein "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" is rebuking his own countrymen for their having retrograded to the rudiments or first principles of the belief to which they had been converted, to expound most of the elements there mentioned, to be not so much the distinctive fundamentals of Christianity, as part of that "moral Revelation" which at some time or other we conceive to have been made universally to mankind. How much, as a matter of fact,

[g] Acts xvii. 23. [h] Heb. v. 12.

this knowledge contributed to the conversion of the heathen to Christianity in the Apostolic age, we cannot decide, because we know not with certainty the extent of the graces of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to men at any period. But we should be unnecessarily overtaxing (if I may without irreverence say so) the bounty of the Spirit, if we were, against the apparent meaning of the Apostle, to ascribe to direct and extraordinary influences of the Holy Ghost the whole work of bringing the souls of those Gentiles to Christianity: or if we were to reject from our account of the acceptance of the Gospel all those helps which, more or less, existed previously in whatever sound and true convictions the converts might, either then or in aftertimes, have been brought to by a rightful and judicious exercise of their unassisted mental powers.

Here then, without adducing other portions of Scripture which tend to confirm the point contended for, or raising any questions as to the different convictions of the Gentiles of St. Paul's day, and of those who at subsequent times have considered the claims of the Gospel to entitle it to acceptance, apart from any consciousness of being influenced in any measure by the External Evidences,

we recognise the principal materials of that species of Reasoning which we before said was common to both maintainer and impugner of the Christian Revelation; and which has, rather from its seeming than its real contrariety to *Facts*, been always the favorite resort of the latter.—Nor, if the foregoing remarks be just, needs the Christian apologist be apprehensive that his stock of argumentatory materials will be a scanty one, or that he will be confined within narrow limits by the restrictions which in the earlier part of this discourse were laid upon him. Before the External evidences come into view, he will have, in the field of the *a priori* reasonings which are retained, ample scope for the exercise of the most various ingenuity, and for the display of the most extensive erudition and experience. The whole expanse of the Moral and Natural worlds will still lie before him; and, as surviving the exclusions which have been insisted on, every notion of antecedent probability, every reasonable anticipation, and apparent likelihood of connexion between what we are prone to call Cause and Effect in moral subjects, by whatsoever inlets they may have found their way into the reasoning mind, will yet remain, and will fall clearly within the con-

ceded province of this species of argumentation.

Nor is this all, or nearly all. As compensation, and far more than compensation, for all possible disadvantages under which the restrictions before insisted on might be thought to lay the Christian reasoner, there exists the authority of Holy Scripture, which is equivalent to any amount or form of demonstration that can be desired. Here let us compare not the Jew and Gentile with each other, but the Christian with them both. How much advantage hath not the Christian?—the Christian, I mean, who is in possession of the whole volume of the New Testament. Here surely we have enough, and more than enough, to outweigh all the means and materials of conviction which may be thought to lie at the disposal of other reasoners. There are, if we choose to say so, an Eternity, and a Universality in the announcements of the Sacred Volume, matching the same ideas in the region of human demonstration: there is an Eternity, because the revelations of God give utterance to truths (the immortality of the soul, for instance) which are of eternal moment; a Universality, because they affect the whole human race; nay, we are assured, are

such as that the angels of God take an interest in understanding and meditating upon them. Nothing, in a word, that is needed for the most perfect certainty of which the mind is capable, is wanting to him who implores the illumining grace of the Holy Spirit to assist him in understanding and interpreting the Sacred Records, which he believes to have been originally dictated by the self-same Spirit. "If they see, and perceive not; if they read, but understand not; if they hear, but comprehend not; the defect is not in the object, but the faculty; not in the book of God, but in the will of man; not in the smaller errors of interpretation, but in the want of the first elements and materials of religious perception."

And here, I would say, come in all those reasonings which in the common systems of divinity constitute the main body of the Internal Evidences. Such arguments, I mean, as are drawn from the observed adaptation of Divine Revelation to the condition and circumstances of mankind; its perfect suitableness to supply the wants of our intellectual and moral nature, and especially that craving after happiness which is inseparable from the human soul, and which the systems

of heathen or mere rational philosophy have in vain endeavoured to satisfy. For how, we may ask, can arguments of suitableness, correspondency, and adaptation be constructed, unless there be on the part of the reasoner some previous knowledge of the indispensable characteristics of those doctrines, those precepts, those institutions, which render them so certainly appropriate to the given case? Man must know the particulars of his own position and capacity; but he must know more. He must have some general (at least) perception of the required qualities of all that professes to be extended to him for the purpose of relieving his moral necessities, and enlightening the darkness of his understanding. He must be prepared to estimate, at the same time that he welcomes, the aids which a Revelation offers to him, and even to criticise to a certain degree its contents. The mass of internal evidence, I say, as we meet it in the writings of Christian apologists, rests upon the assumption of this necessity; nor would it be possible to admit the strong claims advanced by them on behalf of this branch of evidence, were we able to disprove the tacit hypothesis upon which they all along proceed. It is not enough then to say, that "the principles of natural and essential reli-

gion are supposed to be known" before we come to the consideration of the external evidence; that we should account these principles to comprehend not simply "the being of one almighty and perfect God, and the creation of the world by Him; but also the immortal and accountable nature of man—a future state of rewards and punishments—the obligation of loving, worshipping, and obeying God—the several branches of ordinary duty to our fellow-creatures:" these, doubtless we may consider to be sufficiently established without the help of Revelation, "by the works of creation, the fragments of man's moral nature, the tradition of the original revelation, the voice of conscience;" but something more than this is required still. These, were we to stop with them, would be found an inadequate preparation, far from amounting to that state of antecedent knowledge which man must bring with him in order to assay and appreciate the dealings of God. As respects doctrines and precepts, for example, he must be qualified to discern the comparative value of Christian and all other;—of motives, he must be able to pronounce which, upon a comparison of those which Christianity urges upon him, and all that he may find inculcated

elsewhere, are the better, purer, and more calculated to prove efficacious for the ends which they profess to serve. For it cannot but be conceded, that it is because the Bible will stand the application of all these tests, because it corresponds with every anticipation which those have formed, who with minds set aright and duly disciplined, address themselves to the study of it;—because, in one word, it answers our reasonable *expectations*,—that we are believers. Despite the mysteries, and other obscurities which divers circumstances (the brevity of its narrations, &c.) sometimes occasion to the reader, and which, supposing them to surpass all power of explanation, may yet be with good reason regarded as the peculiar sphere of trial for the advanced spiritual discernment of the mature (the τελείοι)[i] in the faith, it is sufficiently perspicuous to level it in the main to the condition of the most untutored mind.—Even "the child (says the pious Bishop of Calcutta) meets with what suits his opening capacities; whilst to the old and experienced it offers that which gives them tranquillity and peace. Keeping pace with all the improvements of mankind in learning and science, in philo-

[i] Heb. v. 14.

sophy and the arts—nay keeping above and beyond them all—opening its treasures as man advances for searching them out, it is illustrated and confirmed by every acquisition in human knowledge; it meets and suits the mind of the savage emerging into civilisation, and yet soars far above the intellect of the scholar and the divine in the most refined advances of society. Like *all* the works of God, it is adapted to men in every stage of improvement, and the more it is studied, the more do the topics of admiration multiply." What is this but shewing that the mine of *a priori* reasoning is unexhausted and inexhaustible?

But to carry our observations further in this direction would be to intrench upon the subject of Natural Religion, which presents itself at once to our thoughts when we have reached this point in our general inquiry. The consideration of this subject in some of its bearings will occupy us on the next occasion.—It remains now to annex to the remarks which have been offered two only cautions with respect to a right estimation of our *a priori* reasonings in Religion.

First, What has been said should dispose us to be on our guard against a propensity to which the most sincere, zealous, and well-

meaning Christians, often indeed in exact proportion to their possession of these qualities, are liable, and which impels them to *dogmatise* with unrestrained vehemence upon Religious subjects. This disposition is perhaps strongest in those persons whose religion involves "no intellectual exercise, and, strictly speaking, no *subject* of intellect at all; possessing in fact, (as it has been expressed,) apart from their feelings, no definition, no topics, no distinct succession of views." Such persons are not unfrequently the most forward and pertinacious in imposing upon others the peculiar articles of their own faith, which are the same as their own *a priori* convictions on Religious points, as if they must necessarily be superior to the surest deductions of sound and enlightened reason. Our present observations may at least suggest the duty of maintaining a vigilant guard against all temptations to tyrannise over the faith of others by inculcating, as necessary to salvation, any dogmas whatsoever which have not a plain and unquestionable origin in the written Word of God. The task may be difficult, undoubtedly it is, in the generality of cases where this disposition betrays itself within our own communion to distinguish the alloy from the pure ore, to separate "the

chaff from the wheat[k]." But the existence of the spurious element even in the most perfect and unexceptionable systems of Divinity which have appeared in the world may without irreverence (when we take into consideration the nature and circumstances of their framers) be assumed. Nor does it seem consistent with Christian courage, however agreeable it may be to the maxims of a worldly prudence, to shrink from the obloquy which has been sometimes cast upon those who may have denounced, as exercising pernicious influence upon the growth of practical Christianity, whatsoever of simply human material shall have been suffered to mix with the authoritative statement of the Christian verities. Nay, when they go farther, and acting upon the testimony afforded by History, condemn the introduction of that which is not indubitably of divine origin into all *systematic* representations of a saving Faith, they are assuredly not to blame; rather should they be thanked and praised, if with all their jealousy of God's honour, and tenderness for the consciences of their fellow-men, they are yet most careful in their teaching and other ministrations to conform to every portion of

[k] Jerem. xxiii. 28.

inherited doctrine, which can be shewn to be not extraneous to the spirit and essentials of the Sacred Truth. All that has now been urged amounts to saying, that there is nothing, which being derived from any other source than the fountain of living waters opened for us in the Holy Scripture, can be promulged with that degree of positiveness and absolute certainty, which should enter into our conceptions of the dogmatical delivery of religious doctrine. But the tenor of my observations is not to countenance, in any way, the notion that the deductions of human wisdom (be it the wisdom of Greek or Roman sage, of Christian father, or Scholastic doctor, or whose-soever it may, provided only it deserve the name we give it) are unserviceable, whether for the expansion and enforcement of Christian truth on the one hand, or for the establishment of its supreme authority on the other. On the contrary, it is to these that, under the Divine blessing, we must look for those additional safeguards of the true faith, which it is the office of humanity to supply, as the centuries of the Gospel continue on their appointed ceaseless course; and by the reaction of which upon the Scriptural teaching of the Church, I have been insisting that the stately pile of the Christian evidences,

age by age, and year by year, is ever increasing in height, and becoming more and more consolidated.

Secondly. Let us not be dismayed by the untoward objection to which it must be granted that *a priori* principles are liable; an objection which goes the length of stigmatizing them all as *prejudices*. Prejudices in a literal sense they unquestionably are, and cannot but be. But to reject them summarily on this account would be little short of assenting to the removal of most of the groundwork of our probable reasonings on all subjects; or rather it would be making one *a priori* maxim destroy or (as lord Bacon would have said) "bowstring" all others. For what, it may be asked, is the objection itself but an *a priori* principle, calling in question the tenability of all *a priori* principles, itself alone excepted? and, doing so, simply and solely because, forsooth, they *may* be in the bad sense of the word prejudices? I say in the bad sense, for there is incontestably a good sense also of which the word "prejudice" is susceptible, according to which indeed the most momentous and reverend truths in every department of attainable knowledge may equally (if it so please us) be denominated prejudices; the which, nevertheless,

were we to abandon, there would be but little reasonable hope left us of achieving a desired proficiency in any of our studies. Distrust or jealousy of such a sort of prejudices should never lead us to do more than test and prove their real value, with the fixed determination, when we do so, of abandoning them indeed if we find them false, but on the other hand of adhering to them, and upholding them with constancy, should we upon examination become assured of their validity. But this prejudice against prejudice, which the objection in question embodies, has been, as respects one remarkable mode of its operation, not long since exposed with great ability from this place.

Finally, I would say, if we look upon Revelation in the light of a Science, it must be studied in a philosophical spirit; that is, in a spirit really and truly philosophical. This will be not by dogmatism on the one hand, nor on the other by trying to divest the mind at the outset of all its principles, under the apprehension that men will call them prejudices, but rather by retaining, cherishing, and acting out those maxims, which we may have been taught to believe and reverence in the course of our Christian education, or by wise reflection upon what we read and ob-

serve. Our religious speculations, if otherwise conducted, we may rest assured, will never issue in a sound and sober theology. Whether indeed the right process be inductive or deductive,—in other words, whether or no theology be an exemplification of the new or of the old system of philosophy; or in different parts, and in different degrees, it partake of the character of both? are questions, the solution of which may (I have before said) be left to the consideration of a very few. But all men, we know, must be theologians, as they are also (according to the well-known remark of the philosopher) more or less moralists, poets, orators, and so forth; and they will assuredly find it a hard task to improve this original and native talent to its right use, if they set about to sweep away all their earliest notions, and reduce their minds (as far as they can do so) in religious matters to the condition of a mere *tabula rasa*—the course so often recommended by those who in every age would fain be thought the *unprejudiced*, and therefore the only wise and impartial instructors of mankind.

Nay, it would seem that the necessity of the acknowledgment and maintenance of some fixed first principles should be most

liberally conceded by those who are so forward to contend for a marked difference between Theology and every other science, to the alleged disadvantage of the former. "While each other science," say they, "goes forward—while it makes new observations, or combines facts more judiciously, or from these infers and induces general laws hitherto unnoticed, and so *developes* itself, becoming yearly wider, deeper, and more certain, its numerous phenomena being referred back to elementary principles and universal laws—Theology remains in its old position. And if it be ever seen to move at all, it is not, as other sciences, smoothly and by regular advance, but only by leaps and starts." If this be true, either some new *novum organon* with its own peculiar store of principles, is still desiderated for the prosecution of theological inquiry, or we must perforce fall back upon our existing stock, whatever that stock may be. Of these two courses whether is the more reasonable, or, which is to us of equal moment, possesses the sanction of our own Church, there can exist no doubt.

Let then the sincere student of Scripture and of his own heart only do justice to them both. Let him, whilst he looks upon the Divine word as really a treasure, esteem also

the impulses and powers of good of which he is conscious in himself in the light of a talent committed to his safe keeping and improvement. If he search his own heart and intellect, he will discover in them the strongest antecedent obligations to seek after, to love and to obey God. Going from thence to the written word, he will find those obligations implied, strengthened and enforced; and will make the two testimonies which are thus supplied to the leading doctrines of Revelation interweave with, react upon, and constitute each other. He will thus edify and establish his own faith; and, as respects his profession of the faith before others, he will hold its essential and vital parts in meekness and charity. All that is collateral and subsidiary in the religious structure he will concede to the province of opinion, waiting in humility of spirit for the coming of that blessed time when, he is assured by the voice of faith within him, "the operations of the intellect and the emotions of the heart shall" (to apply the words of the pious prelate already named in this discourse) "be for ever harmonized in the revelations of a world, where knowledge and love will be united in their highest exercises, never to be disjoined or clouded through eternity."

SERMON III.

Rom. ii. 14.

These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.

THE observations made in the preceding Lectures were intended to remind us that knowledge of the Divine and human natures is the ultimate object of all our purest and holiest aspirations, and that in its attainment consists the blessed consummation of the chief (if not indeed all, the) purposes for which we can suppose ourselves to have been created. Absolute knowledge, by which is meant a perfect and intimate acquaintance with subjects so obscure and difficult, has been, it was said, withholden from us in our present temporal condition:—nor could such knowledge, perhaps, be attained by man without a concomitant apprehension of the entire system of the universe, both visible and invisi-

ble;—but that, nevertheless, perceptions, of a *relative* sort, of the natures and characters of both God and man, together with a sense of the duties naturally arising on the part of man from these perceptions, are placed by the Divine bounty within our reach, and that this kind of knowledge, as it is the only true Wisdom of which our present faculties are capable, so by its being accessible (though in different degrees) to all men, it furnishes at once the rule and the test of human conduct, and thereby determines the character of each individual in the eyes of the righteous Governor and Judge of the whole earth.

The knowledge which, as a religious being, man is both qualified and encouraged to cultivate, having been described in a very general manner, I then proceeded to notice in a similar way the subject of Evidence; having in view, principally, to guard my younger hearers against expecting from others, or claiming for themselves in the advocacy of Christian truth, more cogent sorts of Proof than the matter really admits of. Accordingly, a great part of the preceding Lecture, it may be remembered, was taken up in discarding certain lines of argumentation, metaphysical and other, not so much on the ground of their acknowledged abstruseness

and profundity, as because they are clearly and avowedly of a different character from the matter upon which they are employed. This however, as I was careful to state, by no means amounts to the exclusion of all *a priori* reasonings; but on the contrary, if we rightly understand such reasonings in their application to the distinctive teaching of Christianity, they will be seen to constitute a great portion of those proofs which are recognised and assembled by Christian apologists under the title of the Internal Evidences of Christianity.

And when I spoke of *objections* to Revelation arising from the same general source, I would be understood to have comprehended under them all insinuations, inuendoes, and the like, which unhappily abound in infidel writings to the disparagement of the Sacred Truth. The celebrated sarcasms of Gibbon, for instance, if closely examined, resolve themselves into the mere suggestions of a shadowy and *mundane* (so to speak) probability, of which the writer readily availed himself while pursuing his narration of events which, from the peculiar bias of his philosophy, he would insinuate to have been but the natural results of human agencies; and which could, under this conception of their import-

ance, never, of course, rise above their dead terrestrial level. A mind such as his would easily find food for scepticism in every appearance of the world of nature and reason; and would take delight, wherever the existence of secondary causes could be discovered or surmised, in substituting their operation for the overruling Providence of God.

The remark might be extended with equal justice to the other most famous infidel philosophers of the last century, to whose early prejudices against religion we may, like their contemporaries, ascribe the melancholy fact, that they embraced every opportunity of assailing that sacred subject rather than any other with the keen but impotent weapons of their ridicule and raillery.

But it was insisted that the advocate of Revelation would not be justified in conceding to his infidel opponent the undisputed possession of the field of controversy, as respects the sort of reasonings before us. It has been the fate of the objections which have just been alluded to, though urged with all the arts of a cultivated rhetoric, and the poignancy of a refined wit, against either the truths of Christianity or its evidences, to have been encountered and vanquished by

more enlarged and truer views of the natural and moral world. The more limited *a priori* argument, in fact, has been forced to bow before the more comprehensive maxims of an extended knowledge and experience. Thus has it fared with modern objections to Christianity and its peculiar doctrines. But when we took a wider view, and regarded the matter historically, it was urged that at all times not only the wise and educated, but the ordinarily observant individual could command arguments in abundance of a presumptive kind in favour of revealed religion. The holy apostles, and especially St. Paul, of whom we know most, it was observed, appear to have assumed this in their teaching, and certainly did not treat those with whom they conversed, Gentile any more than Jew, as if the understanding of their hearers were utterly devoid of correct impressions as to the character and probable dealings of the Deity. And in like manner, down the whole stream of Christian history, the same fact might have been exemplified in the conduct of those defences of Christian truth which were called forth from time to time by the assaults and machinations of the infidel and heretical. Although then we might on many grounds prefer the other

great branch of evidences known under the title of external, we were yet constrained by the equity of the case to lay much stress on the aids thus afforded by the internal evidence for the maintenance and support of the Gospel cause. And hence we were immediately and forcibly made aware of the propriety of considering, for a while, the position occupied in relation to this all-important subject by what is generally understood under the phrases, the Light of Nature, and Natural Religion.

It were both tedious and unprofitable to dwell upon the various uses and abuses of such a term as Natural Religion. Some, we know, have understood by it those impressions on religious subjects, and those only, which it is conceived are part of the original furniture of each individual mind, as it first comes into being in its present deteriorated or lapsed condition. Others would superadd to these the principles which the mind may subsequently acquire and assimilate to itself from every other source, Revelation alone being carefully excepted. Others again are wont to regard these latter principles as constituting the only and entire staple of the Religion of Nature; being reluctant to allow that the mind of man is from the first in the

possession of *any*, however qualified it may be to become the receptacle afterwards of *all*, religious impressions whatever. The diverse conceptions of the Light of Nature, as it is shed upon the region of religious knowledge, are, if I mistake not, merely modifications of the general views now mentioned.

Now to whichsoever of these several views we may incline, it is evident that the materials of reasoning supplied by Natural Religion are to be considered (in their speculative aspect) *anterior* to the operation of that spiritual discernment which Christianity teaches us is bestowed upon the faculties of the true believer in Christ.

As respects the first and second of the descriptions given, this is obviously the case. For the element which is common to them both, consists in attributing to the mind at the very commencement of its existence certain innate or connate ideas or conceptions, which are available, and indeed of prime importance, in its future processes of thought and reasoning—inasmuch as they amount, in fact, to so many incontrovertible maxims in things pertaining both to the nature and the dealings of God. Not that all persons are competent to give an account of these, because few comparatively of the human race

are alive to the consciousness of their mental stores. But they are to be considered nevertheless as belonging to all men, since none who have time and inclination and patience and ability to exercise their introspective powers can (it is said) fail to become sensible of their existence. Many of our own divines call these principles by divers figurative designations, such as "rays of heavenly light," "seeds" and "germs" of religion, and the like, contending also that in their natural and ordained development they lead easily, and as it were by an impulse of congeniality, to the adoption of Revelation, and the consequent gradual progress in edification of each healthy and rightly-ordered mind. But there are many also ranking equally high in theological and philosophical estimation, who dispute the existence of such principles altogether; and these persons form the third class before noticed. In the opinion of such it is enough that there should be allowed to exist in man a faculty, to be called *intuitional*, if we please, but simply a faculty—an entity quite distinct from the objects upon which it acts—by the spontaneous exercise of which we discern the realities of the spiritual, in a manner analogous to the operation of our senses upon the material, world. The still more

subtle question too continues in agitation, whether the objects of which this faculty takes cognizance have an independent existence, or are to be looked upon as possessing a merely relative and subjective reality. The settlement of such questions, it is manifest, would carry us beyond the limits of my present inquiry; but a few observations bearing upon the speculations adverted to may be advanced, for the sake of that section of my auditory, for whose instruction the periodical treatment of these and similar subjects was unquestionably designed.

I. It must be allowed, in the first place, that the fact of a Revelation made to Adam alone would be enough to support that line of argument which denies the *demonstrability* of an innate knowledge of Divine things on the part of man; and this without arguing at all upon the *supposable* knowledge of Adam before his act of disobedience, and apart from the influences of direct communications then made to him by his Creator. We know too, that if there be any principles deserving to be accounted universal in the mind of man, a strong and almost irresistible desire of imparting knowledge is one of them. The relation of parent to child, as it commonly commands the most frequent opportunities

of communicating information, so in other respects it bears with a peculiar force upon the question now before us. It is inconceivable, or nearly so, that the father who was himself convinced of the being of God, and who enjoyed even the faintest perceptions of His character and will, should not impart this his noblest and most highly prized knowledge to his immediate posterity. Coupling these few and obvious reflections with a belief that a Revelation was actually made to Adam of those primary truths which have been claimed as the dictates of natural religion simply, we draw a conclusion against the *necessity*, at least, of any innate ideas of religious truth.—And, it must be remarked, this argument is not refuted by any alleged or real imperfection attaching to traditionary communications in other cases. Such transmissions are unquestionably imperfect in comparison with other modes of conveying truth from age to age, even though it be conceded that the traditional matter may very often have truth for its foundation. But, be that as it may, if any should be disposed to connect the observations just made with the case of Traditions as upheld by the church of Rome, it seems a duty to remind him that in the question to which my re-

marks have been applied, there is no dispute as to the real existence of the mental objects, the difficulties turning only upon the modes and circumstances of that existence. In the question between the Romish and other churches, on the contrary, the Protestant has been asking for centuries in vain for that body of traditions, whether of Divine or Apostolical authority, which his opponent would fain force upon his acceptance, as equally obligatory upon the conscience of the professed Christian with the undisputed written Word of God.

The tendency of these and similar reflections, doubtless, is not only to suggest the possibility of man's original condition being one of a mere capacity to receive ideas, rather than a state of actual and conscious possession of them from the first, but to establish the *probability* also of the case being actually so; — and the same hypothesis appears to gather strength when we pass on in thought to the consideration of the times immediately succeeding the disastrous epoch of the Fall.

II. That this awful event is of moment in its bearings upon the present question is undeniable; and it has accordingly been not unfrequently adduced as furnishing an argument *a fortiori* against the very existence of

natural Religion in its most usual sense. For how, it is said, upon the assumption of the fact as recorded in Genesis, and of its alleged consequences, could the unassisted and unenlightened mind of man be equal to faith and obedience to those laws and precepts which we may suppose it to have inherited; and which Sin, or rather its crafty and malignant Author, had proved sufficiently powerful to counteract even in the case of our first parents? Surely it is of the very essence of the doctrine of the fall, that "the condition of man[a]," if he be left to himself, must grow gradually worse and worse, unless the downward tendency be arrested by the interposition of Divine Grace. A being gifted with original righteousness had sinned against the light which radiated from the actual presence of God Himself. When that light was withdrawn in displeasure and wrath, how great, how overwhelming must have been the darkness which succeeded! Fresh supplies of knowledge then, it has been thought, must have been vouchsafed to man shortly after the fall of Adam — a body of information which should serve as some sort of guidance and consolation in his degraded state, and a pledge at the same time of eventual, though distant, restoration to the for-

[a] Art. X.

feited favour of his Creator. In short, a *revelation*, more or less explicit, was probably extended, if not to Adam himself, at any rate to his immediate descendants, for the gracious purpose of cheering them in their despondency, and enabling them to look forward to a day of future blessings yet in store for all who should tread in the appointed paths of duty and allegiance.

The spread of this primeval knowledge to the various parts of the civilized world—its traces among the Eastern nations, and particularly in Greece—its various transformations, corruptions, mutilations—in a word, the divers shapes, solemn and grotesque, which it assumed, as it traversed the earth to and fro in ancient times, and found its exponent in the religions and customs of different peoples, belong to the historical part of our subject; and, I may observe here, constitute a portion of study abundantly cultivated amongst ourselves. Whether or no what we read in the moral works of Plato and Aristotle, or in the fragmentary ethics, or rather gnomology of the Greek poets and historians, are only remnants of, or changes (so to speak) rung upon, the dictates of that moral code which is known to theologians under the title of the "Precepts to the sons of

Noah," may furnish an interesting point of inquiry to the religious student. But it concerns not my present purpose. It is enough for this that the probability of the portions of Divine knowledge under consideration having been directly communicated by God to meet the necessities of the earliest forefathers of the human race, should be conceded.

At the same time, when a late learned prelate of our Church states, "that it is *demonstrable* from a consideration of the powers and faculties of the human understanding, that it cannot attain to knowledge of any kind without some external communication," he certainly appears liable to the charge of overstatement, if not of having assumed the very point in question. "The mind cannot," says Bishop Van Mildert, "*perceive*, unless an impression be made on the *organs* of perception: it cannot form *ideas* without perceptions; it cannot *judge* without a *comparison of ideas*:—it cannot form a *proposition*, without the exercise of its *judgment*: it cannot *reason*, argue, or syllogize, without this previous formation of *propositions* to be examined and compared." Hence he draws as an inference, that "the mind of man can in the first instance do nothing of itself,"—"all

its materials must come from without; and the mind unfurnished with these is incapable of attaining to the lowest degree of knowledge."

A theory thus positive denies altogether the existence of any independent perceptions, whether of Divine or human truth; and its soundness may be (indeed it often has been) called in question. I may remark, that in a metaphysical point of view, the opinion of the heathen moralist, so tersely expressed in the words *αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα, καὶ νοοῦμεν ὅτι νοοῦμεν*, is more in unison with the philosophy of our own day; and that many grave objections may be brought against the opposite theory, whenever it is sought to apply it specially to the provinces of theology and ethics.

If the line of thought suggested by the learned prelate in the passage which I have quoted were followed out, the evidences of the Christian Religion might be very rapidly dealt with, as respects, at least, their entrance into the mind of man. Accordingly, he soon after ascribes all our ideas to Sense and Inspiration, as the sole and sufficient inlets of knowledge into our minds. I need not point out how unsatisfactory is such a view to those who maintain the existence of moral percep-

tions entirely apart both from the powers of sense and the aids of inspiration, properly so called, and who studiously distinguish all its other acknowledged powers from the principle of faith, or the religious principle, in the accounts which they give of the structure and capabilities of the human soul.

It is not however the object of this Lecture to discuss, but rather to point to the existence of opinions, important indeed as they stand connected both with the truth of Christianity and with its evidences, but yet so wide and so profound in the character of the speculations involved in them. One remark only shall be made upon that part of the theory just noticed, which relates to Sense, considered as one great channel of entrance for knowledge into our minds. It is, that the very evidence afforded by the senses themselves is, in a speculative point of view, imperfect, unless we are impressed, *a priori*, with a full conviction of the constancy and immutability of the Divine attributes. And this we must bear in mind when we come to the examination of the competency of the external evidences alone to establish the truth of the Gospel. For with the most abundant testimony to the facts of the Scriptural narrative staring him in the face, the

infidel, we should remember, may yet deny the faithfulness of the powers of sense themselves. And there seems to be no other speculative, or purely argumentative way of proving that our senses are to be depended upon, than by connecting their uses and efficiency with the goodness of Him to whom we are indebted for them. "For the best, the only security that we have that our senses do not deceive us, and that every thing in the world is not quite otherwise than it appears to us to be," writes Bishop Blackall, "is *the goodness of God;*" and this same security we have, he argues, in an especial manner and degree with reference to the one great leading fact of Christianity, I mean that of our Lord's Divine mission. "Nay," he goes on, "we are more secure of this than we are of any other fact, because it is more plainly inconsistent with the goodness of God to deceive us in a matter on which our everlasting welfare depends, than in matters only of this life, which are the chief things for which our bodily senses are of use to us." The applicability of the remark to all the phenomena, and its connexion with our immediate subject, are too obvious to require comment.

Leaving then all theories as to their origin,

(which, after all, must stand or fall according to the faithfulness of our reading the mind of infancy,) we must assume that there are a certain number of principles which ordinary observation, united with common sense, recognises as possessing authority over our reasonable nature; certain convictions, thoughts, or anticipations, which every man carries along with him to test the teaching, and, it cannot be doubted, the external evidences also, of Revelation. It is the presence of these which qualifies men to be in some sort, when they approach the investigation of religions, no less than when they are concerned with other kinds of inference, "a law unto themselves." But when it is asserted, that they would enable us without the aid of extraordinary Divine communications (and this is the most insidious suggestion of all that have been made by modern infidelity) to "frame a religion for ourselves," such an arrogant and impious pretension must be repelled with all the earnestness of a holy abomination. But there can be no doubt that the principles in question serve as the criterion of religious doctrines when these are offered to our acceptance, and it is from their efficacy and value in this respect that I have given them place in our present inquiry.

Confirmations of this statement will accompany our consideration of the External Evidences in the succeeding Lectures.—Hitherto I have been speaking of impressions and impulses which all men may be pronounced to possess in greater or less amount of vividness and force, by virtue of their common nature and their ordinary powers of observation: these, when the mind becomes self-cognizant as to its own relation to Divine Things, it finds it next to impossible to extinguish, and extremely difficult to counteract. They require indeed to be taken along with us, and to be added to the facts, when we would construct our formal arguments from History or Sense. They are the major premisses of our reasonings in Moral and Religious Science; and if we make them (as some do) comprehend our "wishes" and most vague anticipations, as well as what we emphatically call our principles, they may be truly said to constitute the evidence of our *natural* Faith, as contradistinguished both to Reason, and to that Faith which is one of the supernatural gifts imparted in the Gospel. Utterly vain and futile accordingly have proved the endeavours of the impugners of Revelation to escape from the dominion of such impressions. Betraying a consciousness

of this, they have generally availed themselves of one or more of them as the foundation of their several systems: and as rebels for the most part carry on their operations under the name and professed authority of their sovereign, so do these opponents of revealed Religion affect the greatest respect for some of the truths which they are really, sometimes unconsciously, undermining. And to this very circumstance we may not unfrequently trace the failure of their attempts. So very difficult, in point of fact, is it when any truth has been once acknowledged, to sustain an argument in a cause which is itself at variance with truth. Error, when it is sought to maintain it by sound argument, is naturally and almost inevitably suicidal; and we might cite numberless instances of infidel objections raised to the positions of the Christian reasoner, e. g. cavils against our Lord's personal appearance, or his choice of followers, or the acts and preaching of the Apostles; perverse solutions of the rapid spread of Christianity; impeachments of the narrations in the Old Testament; scoffings against most, if not all, the doctrines contained in both parts of the Sacred Volume;—in all of which the objector has been often and often overthrown by the

force and fatal recoil of the very admissions which the progress, and in some cases the earliest data of his own argument had rendered unavoidable. And if this be thought to be mere assertion, let any one try for himself the soundness of the remark by carefully examining any of those deistical theories which have set up the absolute wisdom, justice, or mercy of God, and endeavoured to turn those unquestioned qualities of the Divine character against the accounts which are given us in Holy Scripture of the transactions of God with the human race. He will often, if I mistake not, discover that the very attribute which supplies the first principle of the antichristian reasoning is that which in the end suffices to clear up and justify the recorded fact or doctrine; a more expanded knowledge of the circumstances under which what is strange and startling has been performed or taught under Divine direction always dispersing the clouds of seeming inconsistency, and serving thus to impress more deeply than ever upon the candid and honest mind an habitual reverence for the unblemished perfections of the character of God.

And it is at this stage in the order of argumentation that we might introduce with

effect those more comprehensive views of Nature and the Natural world which (as my hearers are well aware) furnish the groundwork of the Analogical reasonings and illustrations contained in the famous work of Bishop Butler. In this masterly defence of Christian truth not merely the workings of the human mind, but all the visible course of things in the present world, is enlisted on the side of Revelation, and seen to militate under the conduct of one grand and leading idea. But it is, we must observe, in the concessions and supposed principles of the opponent of Revelation that we discover the measure of the reasoning throughout; and the chief merit of the work consists, perhaps, in shewing that where the mind of man falls short of a full conception of the Revealed Verities, its natural "[a]darkness comprehending them not," and whensoever nature herself is deficient in any of the introductory helps which she offers to the knowledge of the deeper things of God, *that* ignorance and *that* deficiency are nevertheless in perfect harmony both with the positive declarations of the written record, and with every just and worthy conception to be entertained of the true nature and circumstances of mankind. True it is,

[a] John i. 5.

that the confirmed and steadfast believer rises sometimes from the perusal of the work with feelings of dissatisfaction and pain. But it is because *he* is accustomed (a circumstance which the nature of his position rendered impossible in the writer's case) to practise the injunction of St. Paul by "[b] comparing spiritual things with spiritual." This rule, which seems identical with the exhortation of the same Apostle elsewhere to expound Scripture according to the "proportion" or "Analogy of Faith," was manifestly inapplicable to the circumstances of the argument maintained by Bishop Butler. It would have been utterly irrelevant to have shewn that the observance of the Apostle's rule would suffice to render intelligible to us all the truths of revelation which are necessary to be known, and to give us an adequate insight also into those portions of Scripture which are above the reach of our natural faculties. Of what avail indeed, when the credibility of the Bible is itself the matter in dispute, to prove that into how many soever branches the analogy of Faith may be partitioned, each will upon investigation supply abundant evidence to the truth of the contents of the Sacred Canon? What though the *Verbal* analogy shew us amidst the

[b] 1 Cor. ii. 13.

various peculiarities in style and manner of thinking of the several writers, "a general cast of character and expression," truly said to distinguish the sacred writings eminently from all other productions? Or, if turning to the *Analogy of its Historical Parts,* we urge the collation of the notices of any events or facts which meet us in separate portions of the history (I need here only glance at the Horæ Paulinæ of Paley) as amply vindicating for the entire narrative the most complete consistency in all substantial points? Or if again the same result attend our comparison and scrutiny of Doctrines, by what is called the *Doctrinal* Analogy of Scripture—the discrepancies, whether apparent or to a certain extent real, in detached and isolated texts, disappearing on a full and fair interpretation of all the passages which may have a mutual connexion? What, I say, would it avail to shew all this to the Deists and other Infidels of Butler's day, or to their successors in the present? The language suited for them both then and now is, "You have chosen to reject the Evidence of Christianity, some of you that also of Religion in general, upon speculative principles, and upon like grounds to manifest a scorn and contempt for Religion and its Author. But there are some facts which

surely you must and do allow; nay, you are yourselves forward to acknowledge all those countless phenomena which are bound up in what you call the Book of Nature. Let then (we say) the Book of Revelation be only set side by side with it, and do you peruse and study it with an equal amount of attention, intelligence and candour. We speak not now of the helps which you shall receive in the way of blessing upon your labours; but simply bid you give the Scripture scheme of Providence a fair trial. Stop not, stagger not at difficulties in the one book, which you pass over without concern, or it may be even without notice, in the other. *Suppose* only beforehand that both *may* have proceeded from one and the same Author, and we will venture to predict that the correspondence of fact with fact, law with law, taken individually, collectively, or in that way of ratio which you call analogy, will upon every comparison of the two Books abundantly establish the hypothesis."

Accordingly, here also we might say much on the cases of the Deist and the Atheist. Looking at them in their speculative aspect, I know not where else than in the antecedent presumptions of which we have been speaking, we are to look for means of extri-

cating them from their deplorable and desolate condition. It has been contended, indeed, that the difference between the Deist and the Atheist, as respects the evidences of Christianity, is by no means to the disadvantage of the latter, the reason given being that *his* mind is absolutely vacant, and therefore open to the influences of right reasoning, whereas the other is "occupied with preconceptions." The classical reader will readily recall a similar cavil in the cases of the ἀκρατής (the incontinent) and ἀκόλαστος (the intemperate), when compared in the moral system of Aristotle. This sort of "neutral condition," it is argued, rather fits than incapacitates the Atheist for the proper reception of the evidences of Christianity. But the Deist is proud of his treasured stock of principles. He has constructed his own image of God, but fails to recognise the Divine Majesty in the accounts which Scripture gives of the attributes and administration of Jehovah. His case then is a comparatively hopeless one, since there are no grand principles in religion which he does not already acknowledge. In the case of the Atheist, on the contrary, you have only to teach him your own principles, and he will, or may at least, embrace them, and accompany you all along to

your conclusions. I fear, however, that, as in the parallel case in Ethics, the practical view will exhibit the (so-called) *neutral* position of the Atheist as nothing short of a positively antagonistic power; and that the Deist with his stock of principles, such as they are, is after all the more likely of the two to be converted into the Christian. His conceptions are not absolutely false conceptions; they are rather right notions of the divine character, but drawn in false perspective, and so in fact caricatured—stunted or exaggerated, as the case may be, when the self-complacent theory which he has espoused is compared with the just dimensions, "[e]the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," of the divine character, as unfolded in the Gospel revelations. What is required then in the Deist's case, (and surely it is no hopeless task,) is, to rectify his point of view; that, setting out with a deeper realization of man's necessities, he may be led to perceive that the Christian scheme is a natural and harmonious, however complex, exhibition of those very qualities, which he already admits to be the attributes of the Almighty.

Not but that it is extremely difficult to conceive even the Atheist to be entirely free

[e] Ephes. iii. 18.

from or altogether unoccupied with preconceptions on religious subjects. Such an absolute atheism, despite of what we read of transactions and avowals in a neighbouring country, whether recent or at the end of the last century, may be presumed perhaps, when we take into the account all the excitements and self-delusions incidental to such periods, never to have had any considerable embodied existence amongst mankind.

But it is when we pass from those impulses in which all men participate, to the adscititious and peculiar prepossessions by which they are distinguished from one another, that the real difficulties arise. When we approach these latter, we are at once entangled in all the complex influences which sway the different classes of men to their several opinions on religious and moral subjects. No influence, possible as well as actual, which can be brought to bear upon the judgment, is without its force. Temper, education, habit, associations, external laws and agencies of all sorts, do and must impel our minds to the recognition or rejection of every sort of antecedent probability;—antecedent, that is, to our estimate of the distinctive disclosures of revelation. Hence the importance of laws and criteria by which such presump-

tions may be tested; and hence (*I* may be excused in adding) the advantages of those studies which deal with the peculiar canons and properties of probable reasoning in general.

If it should appear to be an inference from what has now been said, that all our knowledge on moral and religious subjects, and the most part of what we know besides, apart from our perception of mere facts, and the teaching of the Sacred records, is to be set down under the head of internal evidence now before us, it is an inference which I am by no means desirous of disclaiming. Such I believe to be the true state of the case. Not indeed that the internal evidence of Christianity would, when *formally* exhibited, lay claim to all the aggregations of human knowledge as comprehended within its own peculiar sphere. This were an extravagant supposition, not unlike the theory which has been sometimes harboured, that Holy Scripture contains within it the whole sum of real and trustworthy knowledge of every kind. Nevertheless, the undeniable tendency of the remarks now hazarded is, I confess, to the conclusion that every fresh accession of true knowledge is so closely in harmony with the system of revealed religion which we find in

the Bible, as to be an evidence of the truth of the Sacred records, and by necessary consequence, to be confirmatory of the doctrines which they contain. Whatever just deductions or inferences may be gathered in the various fields of human speculation and research, will be discovered to react upon and corroborate the statements made in the written Word of God. Now and then, but only when knowledge in any department is in an imperfect or transient state, will there be seeming discrepancy between what is thought to have been ascertained from other sources, and what is revealed in the pages of the Sacred volume. But as surely and as soon as our information upon each subject becomes more definite, clear, and expansive, all incongruities are seen to vanish, and the intimations of Scripture are amply vindicated from the doubts and feelings of misgiving which may previously have hung around them. Still it is our duty to be on our guard at all times against setting up "the reason of the thing," which too often means a hasty or immature conception of a subject, as equalling in its certainty the apparent teaching of the Bible. For, assuredly, we need not look back to the times of Lord Bolingbroke, Toland, Tindall, and Dodwell, for unscrupulous

attempts to supersede the authority of the written Word. We must acknowledge with pain that an anti-scriptural principle, sometimes assuming the title of a "philosophical sublimity," or, it may be, that of the "collective maturity of the human mind," or some other equally visionary and fantastical designation, is much too active even amongst professing Christians in the present day. Well were it if men would take a lesson on this point from the earliest converts to Christianity, by whom, it would seem, this mode of dealing with revelation was hardly ever resorted to or even thought of; and if so at all, only by the "disputatious or the philosophizing among converted Jews and Greeks,"—not certainly by those of whom St. Paul was thinking, when he said, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called[z]." The converts to Christianity at the first announcement of the glad tidings of salvation, "made a simple and entire transition from their previous conceptions to the Christianity of the New Testament." In those days, a philosophical religion, as such a phrase would be now understood, was unheard of. Retaining their convictions of the essential qualities of the

[z] 1 Cor. i. 26.

true God, and of those who are commissioned by Him to declare his will, they recognised both in the records of the evangelical history, and the epistles which their teachers addressed to them. "They saw the miracles," writes Dr. Chalmers, "they acquiesced in them, as satisfying credentials of an inspired teacher; they took their religion from his mouth, their faith came by hearing, and their hearing by the words of a divine messenger. This was their process, and it ought to be ours."

The correctness or tenability of the general statements which I have been making might be shewn, did time allow, by applying them to each of the three grand provinces into which our knowledge is familiarly divided;—I mean *natural*, *metaphysical*, and *moral* science. But of the first of these I will only remark, that the general propositions occurring in the science of the material universe being of the nature of laws, and these laws of universal operation, they are of but little direct efficacy in practical matters; that is, in their application to morals, politics, and religion; but that still their study is useful to the Theologian, both with respect to the investigation of a certain branch of evidence, (I allude to miracles,) and still more so by reason of the alleged result of such an em-

ployment of our faculties on the religious tone and temper of the mind. For we are assured, that in processes of discovery at least (however it may be in those of development) the mind of the physical student is led by natural and easy stages to the ultimate and primary truths of the Divine agency, and is thus won to piety by the perception of order and connexion necessarily antecedent to the recognition or establishment of any physical law. "The person," says Professor Whewell, "whose mind is employed in reducing to law and order and intelligible cause the complex facts of the material world, is compelled to look beyond the present state of his knowledge, and to turn his thoughts to the existence of principles higher than those which he yet possesses;" and, he afterwards says, "the effort and struggle by which he endeavours to extend his view, suggests to him that there must be a source of clearer illumination at a distance from him."

The second, or *metaphysical* branch, may (after the remarks made on previous occasions) be entirely dismissed from notice now. But if only in the remaining region of *ethical* speculation all the truth to which the natural perspicacity or the cultivated reason of man can lead him, may be made to illus-

trate and confirm the statements and implied teaching of the Scriptures, the new or the more enlarged knowledge invariably reflecting a ray of light upon the sacred page, and acting as a testimony more or less powerful in every case to its veracity, how copious is the amount of evidence arising from this single source!—If again, matters excepted against in any parts of Holy Scripture (in the Old Testament for example) can be shewn to have been, notwithstanding first appearances, merciful or wise arrangements under the circumstances of those to whom they relate, what an accession is there not supplied by these also to the other means of proof lying at the disposal of the advocate of Christian truth! And hence it is, that in regard to the alleged Divine Authorship of the Old Testament, the *worthiness* of the moral instruction to be found in that portion of the Sacred Volume, has been pronounced by all who have fairly and candidly weighed it, to be satisfactory evidence of its general inspiration; whereas, if we take the ethical teaching of the New Testament, whether or not we regard its morality as proceeding entirely from our Lord Himself, and enuntiated only in a delegated and derivative manner by his followers, the clear and undeniable fact that

it embodies precepts of unrivalled excellence, and rising far above all specimens of moral instruction ever before exhibited amongst men, will render it highly probable that the authority from which it emanated must have been indeed superhuman. The marvelment of our Lord's own hearers expressed in the question, "[a] Whence had this man this wisdom?" condenses the argument into its briefest form; and the question will not admit of any other answer than that which the Christian gives to it, who sees in the teaching of Jesus the most unequivocal and decisive indications of both the wisdom and goodness of God.—And well has this insuperable *a priori* topic been extended to the notice of the circumstances also of the *Writers* of the books of the New Testament, which are confessedly such as to enhance in a material degree the force and value of the argument. "Its authors," writes the dean of Carlisle, "certainly did not represent the learning, the genius and the spirit of their age and country. Their work in life, their daily occupations, their acquirements, and not least the tone of their writings, exclude them from the class of those who would be naturally authors; and far from availing

[a] Matt. xiii. 54.

themselves of the literary habits of their age and country, they afford in their writings the most marked contrast to the specimens of Rabbinical learning that have come down to us. What should we say of a few fishermen on the coast of Sussex, or of a few mechanics of Manchester or Birmingham, who should publish to the world such views of political science, as should remove all the difficulties that at this day encumber politics, and obtain more influence than the laboured volumes of all the philosophers and statesmen of modern and ancient Europe? It is a supposition which is morally impossible: and that the authors of the New Testament should embody in their writings ethical instruction more pure, and far more practical, than ever before had been addressed to mankind, is equally impossible, without the intervention of superhuman help. That philosophical minds, aided by learning and learned communications, should have effected this, would be no otherwise wonderful than that Socrates or Bacon should surpass their age. But that the promulgators of the sublimest and at the same time the simplest ethical views in the world should be in the first place humble, uneducated persons; and, in the next place, members of a community, in which whatever

literature there was was encumbered with the subtleties of a minute and intricate commentary, and with fanciful allegory; this is not merely wonderful, like the works of Socrates or Bacon—not evidence of superior human intellect—but unaccountable, on any view which the ordinary course of man's intellectual nature enables us to form." My only comment upon such *a priori* reasonings is the question, How are they to be refuted?

Let what has now been said serve for a connecting link between the sort of Internal Evidences hitherto noticed, and the other great division of the subject to which the facts embodied in the quotation would naturally lead us. In my next Lecture I purpose, under the Divine Will, to take into consideration the arguments which History supplies in confirmation of the teaching of the Divine messengers. The succeeding one will contain such notices of Miracles, those indispensable credentials of an ambassador truly sent from God, and other more prominent branches of External Evidence, as the occasion may allow. The credibility of Revelation does not, we well know, depend solely and exclusively upon either branch; although many are ready to rest that credibility upon the direct and

External Evidences only. We will not now prejudge the question; but rather let us depart with the persuasion that in the ordering of Divine Wisdom and Grace, the various means and incentives to true belief, no less than those which conduce to Christian obedience and holiness of life, "[b] *work together* for good to those who love God;" that amidst all the diversities of Intellectual and Spiritual light and darkness which a survey of mankind may offer to our view, the same all-bountiful and affectionate provision for our respective wants may be discovered; and the faithfulness of our Lord's own prophetic assurance be brought more and more home to our hearts' conviction;—an assurance as applicable to the internal reception of the Sacred Truth, as it is to the outward deportment of the Christian disciple—that "Wisdom is justified of all her children[c]."

[b] Rom. viii. 28. [c] Luke vii. 35.

SERMON IV.

HAGGAI II. 7.

And the desire of all nations shall come.

IN the prosecution of our proposed inquiry, we are at length brought to the consideration of Facts, properly so called; or, in other words, to that portion of our general sketch to which was given the title of the *Historical* argument.

That this branch of Evidence, when taken *per se*, furnishes the only, as some have thought, or even the highest proof, which again is the assertion of many, adducible in support of our holy religion, must not perhaps be propounded without diffidence. But that it supplies a very powerful, if a sound, argument in its favour; and that, supposing it to fail, Christianity as a distinctive religion must run great hazard of falling to the

ground, are propositions which do not call for formal substantiation. It shall be my endeavour this morning to lay out the argument in respect of its general bearings, and then to break up the wide expanse over which it spreads into certain commodious, though these again will be seen to be vastly comprehensive, partitions; my object being all along to indicate the amount of support which these may severally and collectively contribute to the fabric of Christian truth.

But first, a few words with reference to the conveyance of revealed truth by our heavenly Father to us in the form of history—a point so important in the eyes of some, as apparently to have led them to view, and to define, the entire dispensation of Christianity, not simply in the retrospect, but prospectively also, so as to take in the body of prophecies yet remaining unaccomplished, *a system of facts*. And, incontestably, the least that we could say is, that the selection of this mode of communicating His will by the Omniscient is itself a fact, which cannot but afford, *in limine*, a strong presumption in favour of any of the religious uses to which history of every kind may be made available.

But without stopping to justify any extreme views of the subject, a revelation of

the Divine will and purposes through the channel of history may safely be declared to possess many and great advantages over all other imaginable modes of communication: and the remark has, it would appear, peculiar force when applied to the Gospel revelation. For what, we may ask, are the methods of communication which in such a case admit of being brought into competition with the historical? Two only need be mentioned; each of which, we may convince ourselves with but little expense of time and thought, would have been, humanly speaking at least, sure to fall short of the desired end; viz. 1st, a distinct and separate revelation, supposed to be made to each individual; and 2ndly, the delivery once for all of a systematic code of moral and religious duty for the universal guidance of mankind. Let us consider very briefly the probable effect of these two modes of conveying the will of God to man.

It may be contended (and perhaps unanswerably) that such a communication of the will of God as is contemplated in the former of the modes just specified would afford room for the most unbounded practice of delusion and imposture. That, as the evidence of such revelations must be of private

consciousness only, their contents would be as variable as the biases and caprices of the individuals themselves thus professing to be favored with a special illumination; and that consequently, as every one might (and very probably would) see a revelation whenever he wished one, there could be no such thing as public confidence in the matter, nor, by necessary consequence, any universal recognition of one and the same Divine law. And, moreover, supposing the attestation to the truth of such revelations made to each individual to be sure and incontrovertible, it were to be apprehended then that the sense of the immediate presence of the Deity would so overawe and overrule mankind, as to divest them of their free agency, annihilate all opportunities of virtue and piety, and, in fine, reduce the rational and responsible being (which man now is) to the condition of mere inert passive machinery. And the arguments against such a plan of revelation ought not, it is plain, to stop at these and similar *a priori* considerations. Experience has shewn, in the history of fanatics and enthusiasts in all ages of the church, that the evils thus imagined have, in point of fact, arisen whenever and in exact proportion as any such theories of private and familiar intercourse

of the Divine with the human mind have been encouraged.

On the other of the two modes suggested little needs be observed. The delivery once for all of a complete system of Ethics and Religious duty is easily seen to be inferior to a communication by means of a series of historical documents, in that the former could in no degree secure its own perpetuity; since, however effectual we may suppose such an announcement of the Divine will and purposes to be for a while, it must sooner or later depend upon the testimony of historical records, that is, of the very method with which we are now contrasting it, for its *authentication*.

Thus upon a summary comparison of the different supposable modes of Revelation with each other, the balance is found to be in favour of the Historical form, under which we affirm that it has pleased Almighty God for the most part to reveal his Will to mankind in the Sacred Volume. But there are other, and these not less obvious advantages attaching to the same form. It were easy, for example, to shew that by dealing thus with man in the *concrete*, as History does, (and preeminently so, when we look to its biographical parts,) opportunity is afforded of

a clearer exposition of duties, and a more forcible inculcation of motives to their performance, than could be compassed by either of the methods which have been mentioned; or by any others whatsoever, we may add, which we might choose to bring into competition with them.

Farther, much might be said (did our limits allow) of the consistency of the Historical method of imparting truth with the mediatorial character of God's general dealings with mankind—with his perpetual choice of living instruments for the conveyance of his means of grace under every dispensation;—and, above all, with the doctrine of his own *Personality*, which, impenetrable as is its mystery, we cannot but look upon as intended to familiarise us in some measure with the Divine character and love, which the Historical Revelation essentially opposes to the God of reason, as that notion exists conceptionally in the mere cold and lifeless abstractions of the Intellect.

If there be any force in the observations now made, a general argument arises on the very threshold of the Historical view, from the fact that the entire essence not only of Christianity emphatically so called, but of all the introductory Dispensations likewise, has

been by the wisdom of God interwoven with the history of mankind from the beginning; from the fact, to express myself briefly, that the Bible is as much the history of our race as it is the depository of our religion.

Nor should it escape notice here, that in the present day parties distinguished by the most opposite styles of thinking upon religious subjects, are yet agreed in dwelling and expatiating with greatest earnestness upon the historical features of the Gospel dispensation. We not unfrequently encounter such statements as that "Judaism is a fact" —"Christianity is a fact"—nay, "the Bible is a fact"—phrases, no doubt, indicative of a prevailing spirit of generalization, or, it may be, of a power of peculiar condensation of thought in the minds of those who employ them; but which at any rate convey in or under them the impression of there being something preeminently fact-like or historical in the subjects thus similarly described by such different thinkers. On this single point it would appear that the philosophical and the popular theologian, the dogmatist and the antidogmatist, the Aristotelian and the Baconian (in so far as these last are cognizable distinctions nowadays) hold much the same language, in this country at least.

Their differences, it may be presumed, will chiefly lie in their several modes of reading the records of the past—in their respective interpretations, that is to say, of those vast and complex facts which constitute to the eye of religious contemplation the real and entire history of the world.

And unquestionably the great problem not only for the practical statesman and the man of letters, but also, and perhaps we may say most especially, for the religious student, to solve is, in what spirit history is to be read, rather than what particular portions of existing annals should be selected for perusal. This is a wide subject upon which we cannot now enter. One rule or principle only shall be suggested to the youthful reader; and that is, that he should, when engaged in this department of his studies, maintain a constant, watchful observation of the wondrous manner in which the will of the Almighty overrules all human actions, without destroying the perfect free-agency of his reasonable creatures. In the general tenor of history this truth will be abundantly conspicuous. But it is a deeply interesting, and at the same time an awful contemplation, to note all along the pages of accredited history how circumstances and events, which, hu-

manly viewed, would threaten to defeat or to retard the operations of the Divine counsels, are seen, on the contrary, to bring them to the most successful issue. Ages and centuries which men call dark are discovered, on the retrospect, to have nevertheless teemed with life and light, destined upon the occurrence of some advantageous and sometimes apparently fortuitous change, to chase away completely and for ever the clouds and mists of the preceding darkness; so that where it has seemed good to the Almighty to keep the veil unremoved from the transactions of the past, we have good reason for concluding that there also the Divine purposes were carried on not less surely and uninterruptedly. And this principle it is which is most distinctly traceable in the Bible History of God's dealings with mankind. For let us take even the period comprised between the prophet Malachi and the greater Prophet whose coming he foretold,—which may, notwithstanding such light as is afforded us by the apocryphal writings, be called the dark age of Jewish history,—and we may even here discover the preparation of the Jewish mind for the restoration in every sense of the kingdom to Israel. The Gentile History moves meanwhile exactly in unison with

what we are enabled to pronounce to have been the grand plan of Omniscience from the first—the one mighty work to be accomplished through a long succession of ages down the vista of which the unassisted eye of human prescience could never have carried its vision—the coming of the Son of God himself to enlighten and to redeem the nations. The intermixture of the peoples of the earth, which, if it do not date from Solomon, must at any rate have begun as early as the captivities of the Jews, had done its appointed work. The Romans (and *where* by this time were there not Romans?) became acquainted to a considerable extent with the history and peculiarities of the Jewish people. Thus a knowledge of this extraordinary nation was, in greater or less degree, diffused over the civilized world; and although it is unquestionably difficult even for ourselves to enter into the fulness of the scriptural declaration, and to understand *how* our Lord was "the desire of all nations," yet that he was so in the sense *at least* of a general expectation entertained by Gentiles as well as Jews, is a point abundantly established and explained by many who have investigated this most striking phenomenon, common to both sacred and profane history.

But to be somewhat more particular in our notice of the religious aspect of the history of the world, adverting first to that which preceded the coming of our Blessed Lord. The views of man contained in the Sacred History, and confirmed (where confirmation is possible) by observation and testimony, present him before our minds in the first instance as innocent, happy, and meriting to the utmost the language of approval pronounced by the Creator over all his works:—then degraded and fallen indeed, but yet retaining the power of conscience; God not choosing to leave himself "without a witness" as the Apostle[d] saith, even in "the heart" of man itself. And thus at first all men appear to be upon the same footing, having a Divine law within them, and therefore being unable to urge ignorance as their excuse for forgetting God, and "walking in their own ways." But when individuals arose from time to time of exemplary holiness, the Almighty was pleased to make especial revelations to them, not merely (we are assured) for the purpose of rewarding their piety, and encouraging them to still higher perfection, but making them all, like Noah, "preachers

[d] Acts xiv. 17; Rom. ii. 15.

of righteousness[e]," for the common benefit of mankind in time to come. The divine communications and extraordinary providences vouchsafed to individuals and to a single nation of the Eastern world, form the especial burthen of the Old Testament history; and in the same particulars we discern the mark of separation which divided the Jews from the other nations of the earth. That history closes with the apparent withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the chosen people, even as it had abandoned the rest of mankind two thousand years before. Then ensue upwards of three centuries of the thickest spiritual darkness, calculated (may we not think) in the Divine counsels to usher in with greater glory that "Sun of Righteousness[f]," whom prophecy had declared to be not only the Lord of the second temple to the Jews, but "the desire of all nations." This interval, as was observed before, brings the Jews into contact with the other kingdoms of the world, and may be expected to assimilate them by degrees (notwithstanding the exclusive spirit of their laws and ritual) to the general condition of mankind, and thus prepare them equally with the Gentiles

[e] 2 Pet. ii. 5. [f] Mal. iv. 2, iii. 1; Haggai ii. 9.

for the reception of the Gospel Truth. The "august apparatus," as it has been called, of miracles and prophecies having been removed, the Jewish mind would naturally undergo considerable alteration from its character in the days of Malachi; and the difference would consist in a gradual approximation to the state of the human mind in general. In accordance with such a natural supposition, we find in the sects which sprang up in Judæa between the times of Malachi and the Baptist, counterparts of the most prominent diversities of thinking on philosophical and religious subjects observable elsewhere. I allude to the analogies so frequently made out by learned men between the leading schools of the Greek philosophy, and the sects which make their appearance on the surface of the Jewish history when we read the Gospel narratives, and the writings of the apostles. To follow out these may be an instructive as well as an agreeable employment; but the use I make of them in passing is simply this, that to whatever extent the comparison may be properly carried, to the same precisely must the peculiarity of the Jewish position be lost sight of, when we would form our estimate of the effect of the Christian Truth and its evidences upon that

people. Allowance must of course be made for that modification of their feelings and judgment which the recollections of their former theocratic state could not but have engendered, but such modification will not constitute them an absolute exception to the ordinary workings of the human mind, when engaged upon religious subjects. I offer this remark, because we are often, I fear, prone to look upon the Jews of our Lord's day as affording, more than the actual circumstances of the case would warrant, an instance *sui generis* in the history and the constitution of the human mind.

It is this unity in multiplicity traceable in the earlier conditions of the human race, and making all history to be in this point of view religious history; it is this unity of design and operation, I say, which affords one grand leading argument derivable from the historical source in favour of the Gospel Revelation. If we carry this idea with us to the contemplation of the Sacred Writings, the Bible is indeed one vast *plan*, a single purpose or thought, wrought out, moulded, diversified, according to the various needs of successive generations, and the omnigenous forms of civilization and barbarism which have appeared at any and all times upon

the earth. Every part of it coheres exactly with what is supplied by the other parts, however distant, and however apparently at first sight alien and irrelevant. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, nor is the New to the Old. Whereas the records of all other religions, the mythologies of classical heathenism, and the fantastic legends of the remote East (whether we turn to the Hindoo superstitions, or to the more modern figments of Mahomedanism) notoriously exhibit a mass of disorderliness and confusion, strangely contrasting with the simplicity and consistency of the Christian Records. We may confidently then affirm that these last-mentioned qualities betoken the different origin of such records, and thus afford a powerful and direct argument, no less for their Divine Authorship than for the intrinsic truth which they contain.

Meanwhile, that is, throughout the Ante-Christian period which has been thus summarily described, Prophecy, it must be remembered, was contributing its gradual accumulation of Evidence to that wondrous plan of omniscience whose unfoldings it was appointed to subserve. Prophecy in its connexion with History must be viewed as a stupendous manifestation of both the general

and the special providence of God—of the general, because all prophecy centres in the person and offices of the second Adam, either as pointing to Him, or radiating from Him; —of the special, because its function has been and is to instruct and cheer the human race at seasons when the watchfulness and care of God have been most needed by the despondency or ignorance of fallen man. The combined force of the numerous predictions occurring in the Old Testament only, it is next to impossible to over-rate. Age after age "[a]holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"—and that their prophecies were not "[b]of private interpretation," or the suggestion of their own spirits and fancies, we have the testimony of Him in whom the most important of them actually took effect.—"[c]Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished."—"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then

[a] 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. [b] Luke xviii. 31; xxiv. 44, &c.

opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it *behoved* Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem: and ye are witnesses of these things."

The authenticity of the Holy Scriptures being assumed, it is impossible to read these passages (and numerous others might be added to them) without acknowledging that Christianity and the argument from prophecy must stand or fall together. "In the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms." The whole Hebrew nation (says an ancient Father) is one great prophet, because it prophesied of the Great One.—Nor needed he restrict his remark to the Jewish nation, when it pleased him to adopt this figurative style of speech. The whole world, Gentile as well as Jewish, he might have said, was one great prophet of Him, who was to be "preached among all nations," and in whose saving power "all the nations of the earth were to be blessed[c]." The entire system of the Divine government throughout all the ages which preceded the preaching of the

[c] Gen. xviii. 18; xxvi. 4.

Gospel may be shewn to be preambulatory to the coming of the Redeemer; and we may consider such preparatory character to be in a substantial sense, though not so precise and pointed as in the case of the chosen people, Prophetical. And so "it was a sound and healthy feeling," argues Neander, "that induced the apologists of Christianity to assume the existence of a prophetic element, not in Judaism alone, but also in Paganism, and to make appeal to this, as the Apostle Paul at Athens, in proclaiming the God of Revelation, appealed to the presentiment of the unknown God in the immediate consciousness of mankind, and to those forms in which this consciousness had been expressed by the words of inspired poets. Christianity, in truth, is the end to which all development of the religious consciousness must tend, and of which, therefore, *it cannot do otherwise* than offer a prophetic testimony. Thus there dwells an element of prophecy not barely in Revealed Religion unfolding itself beneath the fostering care of the Divine vintager (John xv.), as it struggles around from Judaism to its complete disclosure in Christianity, but also in religion as it grows wild on the soil of paganism, which by nature must strive unconsciously towards the same end."

Assuredly then, were the statement of the case to stop here, no inconsiderable evidence of the Divine origin of the Holy Scriptures, and, by necessary inference, of the Religion which they teach, will have been afforded by the fact that the historical matter contained in them corresponds exactly with the ascertained condition of mankind in that earlier period of which we have hitherto been speaking.—The argument indeed is parallel to one adverted to in a former discourse, where a correspondence was stated to exist between the tenor of Scripture and the capabilities of the human soul. In the view now suggested we may observe the phenomena which have actually been exhibited in the past history of the world; that portion of it, at least, which preceded the first coming of the Son of God. The other view offered to our anticipations all that will or can, by every rule and principle of likelihood, occur in the future history however protracted, of the human race. Both views are, however, in perfect harmony, and indeed admit of being brought into one. To Omniscience, we are sensible, the conformity is perfectly known from the earliest. But to the observant human being also the uninterrupted series of discernible correspondences keeps gradually unfolding itself

as time rolls on : and in exact proportion as each age discloses in its turn irrefragable proofs of the heavenly providence and wisdom, the mass of Evidence on this side accumulates, and will continue to accumulate till time, and the events which serve to mark its course to mortal apprehensions, shall alike be no more; when the Faith which is now engaged in slowly and dimly tracing the paths and footsteps of the Divine Governance shall be changed into perfect sight, and the intellect of the accepted Christian, having undergone its promised glorious transformation, shall be enabled to understand, under the guidance and in the presence of God, the alpha and omega of History, the entire course of the Divine counsels from first to last.

But the statement of the case does not stop here. Conducted thus far, we have indeed reached only the mid-point in the world's history; nay, when we think of our Lord's own prophecies, and the apocalyptic visions of his immediate followers, only the centre of the Divine narrations contained in Holy Scripture itself. In the epoch and person of the Redeemer the Christian beholds the focus of all past and future history. It is obvious to his discernment how won-

derfully and completely the mission and ministry of Christ fulfilled all the earlier promises of God. Then truly did "the sundry times[a]" and "divers manners" concentrate, and absorb themselves in the fulness of the Revelation made by the Son himself, whom the Father had appointed "heir of all things," "by whom also he *made* the worlds." And backward also to the same divine personage must be referred, and point all the subsequent ages of the world, whether already past or yet to come, for the life, and light, and fostering spirit of assistance which He hath promised to his faithful disciples,—"making," as St. Paul says, "known unto them the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself—that in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ[b]."

Assuming to himself all the various characters under which the Messiah had been pourtrayed by prophecy and type—Saviour, Redeemer, Intercessor, the great Prophet of the church, the King of Israel, the appointed Judge of "quick and dead;" professing to act up to all the remarkable, and, when presented in certain lights, contradictory functions of

[a] Heb. i. 1, 2. [b] Eph. i. 8.

these several offices; Son of God, Son of man; one with the Father, and yet at the same time his Son, Servant, Messenger; spotless from sin, and yet subject to human weaknesses and sorrows—to all the infirmities of his brethren; he is seen to comport himself throughout his personal history in exact conformity with these numerous and most difficult relations. Nay, being himself as mysterious in his carriage as is the wisdom of God which he embodied, he yet proposed himself as an exemplar and pattern to regenerated humanity, "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps[c]." Surely this precept, simple though it may sound to the unthinking, is as great a mystery as any other to be found in revelation. "Such an union of pretensions," writes a living prelate, "was never heard of before or since amongst men. Our Lord is beyond comparison the most extraordinary personage that ever advanced his claims on earth. In the whole business of man's redemption, wonderful in all its parts—in its beginning, its progress, its completion; the *most* wonderful part is the diversified names and offices of our Lord, as compared with his actual conduct in fulfilling them."

[c] 1 Pet. ii. 21.

Nor in a sketch, however general, must we leave unnoticed the zeal displayed by the Apostles, and the argument from the rapid diffusion of Christianity in their day with which it is associated. Many divines have valued the argumentative force of these facts so highly, as to place the remarkable deportment of the Apostles in the front rank of the direct Evidences of Christianity. When they read the language of bold reproof in which St. Peter, for example, addresses his countrymen, who had "denied Jesus in the presence of Pilate, and had desired a murderer to be granted them in his stead [d];"—when they peruse the subsequent narration of the downright refusal of the same Apostle and St. John to abstain from "speaking the things which they had seen and heard [e];"—when they follow down the history of these men and all their brethren, and especially of him who, though "born out of time [f]," was yet not a whit behind any one of the Apostles in the assertion of Christian liberty and independence;—many, I say, when they read all this, feel utterly at a loss to ascribe a zeal and firmness thus ardent and unparalleled to any thing but the immediate and present

[d] Acts iii. 14, 15. [e] Acts iv. 20. [f] 1 Cor. xv. 8, 10; Gal. ii. 8, 11; 2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 12.

influence of a Divine power. And few of those who cannot argue so directly from the same data to the same conclusion, are able to turn away entirely unaffected by that single view of this comprehensive subject which suggests one of the great propositions of the well-known argument of Paley. Yet there are others who, equally convinced, as against unbelievers, of the true origin of apostolic zeal, refuse to reckon it amongst the most cogent proofs of the truth of Christianity;—observing, with Bp. Watson, "that every religion, nay, every absurd sect of every religion, has had its zealots, who have not scrupled to maintain their principles at the expense of their lives." But zeal, when carried thus far, if it prove not the truth of the doctrines and opinions taught by these zealots, affords a presumption at any rate that they believe them to be true, and thus becomes a probable argument in favour of the set of doctrines which may be so attested. The force of the argument, no doubt, rises and falls according to the effect of the attendant circumstances in each several case. And this is precisely the reason why the Christian advocate can fearlessly challenge comparison in this respect with any and all the rival forms of religion. And, if it be a

question of degree simply, where can there be found a case to match the voluntary sufferings of the apostles, and that continuous stream of martyrdom, filling up, as it flowed on, the sufferings of the first great victim, which marks the progress of the Church's victory, and is at the same time the most awfully instructive lesson to be read in the pages of the history of early Christianity?

But to pass on to times posterior to the teaching of our Lord and his Apostles. The same remark which recognises the harmony of the Divine counsels, and the unity of design so conspicuously pervading them in the earlier ages of the world, will apply with equal truth to those upon which we now proceed to comment. The frequent intermixture of prophecy with direct history which has been spoken of as a feature of the Old Testament, is quite as discernible in the New; and many passages in the latter volume might be specified, supposing we were to omit the entire book of the Revelations of the beloved disciple, which convey not only information of the state of things at the time of the Apostles' preaching, but a distinct intimation also of what should be the course of events in time to come. Thus, for example, there is a mass of prophecy as

well as history condensed in the pregnant declaration of St. Paul, which describes the Gospel as "to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness[g];" inasmuch as the prescient mind of the apostle could foresee that the Jews and Greeks were to be for centuries the chief antagonists and rivals of the new religion; and that the struggle should not be terminated until that other prediction had been fulfilled, which declared that "the Gospel should be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations[h]," and the thoughtful and powerful of the earth, attracted by the undeniable purity of its doctrinal system, and the many "virtues[i]" added to their faith by the great body of its professors, abandoned their prejudices, and desired to be themselves admitted within the Christian pale.

It is not necessary to fix the time when by the withdrawal of miraculous and prophetical powers, Christianity was left to its own ordinary and abiding resources. The special and extraordinary χαρίσματα, gifts of grace, which appear to have been indispensable in the very earliest ages of the Gospel, were no longer needed when it had attained to the security of a civil establishment; when,

[g] 1 Cor. i. 23. [h] Matt. xxiv. 14. [i] 2 Pet. i. 5.

in a word, the prediction of the evangelical prophet[k] of the Old Testament was turned into an actual truth of history, by "kings" becoming the "nursing fathers," and "queens" the "nursing mothers" of the Church. The ceaseless struggle maintained between Christianity and paganism for hardly less than *five* centuries, both in the east and in the west, and the slow but sure advances of the former to eventual triumph, can only be adverted to. This latter point, I would however remark, would seem to involve much more than a survey of history purely ecclesiastical; since the fates of the rising creed and its adherents depended all along upon the personal characters of successive emperors and of their delegates and officials, in the scattered provinces of the Roman government. And we may not err, perhaps, in thinking that no event whatever which has been allowed to come down to us in the records of those ages can be fully understood without reference had to its bearings, either friendly or adverse, upon the fortunes of the Christian religion.

The changes undergone by the Church, however, considered as the outward form of Christianity—the heavings, so to speak, of

[k] Is. xlix. 23.

the waters, destined to bear up, notwithstanding the violent storms of persecution of every kind, the everlasting ark of God—all that occurred during the ages which immediately followed the lifetime of the Apostles, must be passed over with very little comment. The reason is obvious. But I may remark generally, that in this point of view, the course of Ecclesiastical History as a whole is marked as yet by three only important epochs, the establishment of Christianity by the emperor Constantine—the rise and progress of Mahommedanism—and the Reformation. Nothing which has occurred since the last mentioned event can be said to vindicate for itself any signal notice in the general history of so vast and so august a subject as the Religion of Christ or Gospel Dispensation. Most true it is, that every generation since, our own being far other than an exception, has with a natural partiality been prone to claim for itself a prominent place in the orderings of Divine Providence, and has conceived of its own importance as though upon itself "the [m]ends of the world" (in the utmost plenitude of that phrase) "had come." Or where this complacent, yet often beneficial, spirit has shewn itself in a milder form, a

[m] 1 Cor. x. 11.

strong conviction has been engendered of living and acting in what is called a transition-state; a state of being felt to be an introduction, a sort of harbinger to some new stupendous manifestation in act of the Power and other Attributes of God. Still our fathers and more immediate forefathers have gone to their rest, and so most probably shall we, witnessing nothing more than the continuance of struggles rendered necessary by the corruptions of a single branch of the Church of Christ, and by the amazing complexities that have grown out of countless social and political interweavings which meet the eye of the most superficial observer of the religious establishments and customs of every Christian land. The issue of these struggles may be, for aught we know, the appointed end of the system of the world, "our habitation;" since (if we are guided by the voice of prophecy) we know not how much of Antichrist there may be in the very existence and maintenance of these selfsame struggles. But if some yet intervening great event, or more than one, may in the counsels of omniscience await the Church of the future in its militant state; and whether that future be what we should deem upon a calm consideration of History and Prophecy,

remote or proximate—these are questions for the settlement of time, and may possibly fall within the province of the historian of some after-period. We ourselves, like those who have gone before us, must be content to float in mere theory and conjecture, as respects points happily of but little moment after all to him who watches and studies to be duly prepared for his Lord's coming.

A very few observations on the epochs referred to will form the conclusion of the present Lecture.

I. The patronage extended by the emperor Constantine to the Christian Church does not appear to have been followed by that triumphant ascendancy of the faith in an *external* point of view, which the enthusiastic feelings of many Christians at the time doubtless led them to expect. But whether he direct his attention to the doctrines of Christianity, or to the personal characters of the rulers of the Church in the centuries immediately succeeding that great event, the ecclesiastical historian will have equally to lament over the corruptions of the true faith by heretical admixtures, and (it cannot be denied) by the evil lives and passions of its most distinguished professors. The influence of a spurious or misapplied learning is also

abundantly conspicuous, when we study the controversies of the period. A philosophical divinity gradually took place of the earlier simplicity of Christian teaching, and the faith, which had before been tried by Jewish and Gentile persecutions, had now to withstand the far more formidable inroads of a subtle and insidious philosophy which had succeeded in their room. How the orthodox belief outlived the tendency at one time almost universal to an eclectic system, which should reconcile and combine the more important tenets of mere human speculation with the revealed doctrines, has often been matter of wonder to the student of the history of those remarkable ages. But it is undeniable that a strong evidence in favour of the Divine origin of Christianity is deducible from the simple fact of its survival.

II. Meanwhile, no intimate knowledge of Christianity was required to discover that it had declined sadly from its original purity and perfection. Although claiming from the first to be "the light of the world," the professors and teachers of the Religion of Christ were by the seventh century sunk in the depths of mental darkness; and the social disorders prevailing throughout the more civilized portions of the earth were, it

cannot be denied, attributable in a great degree to the agitation of Religious differences amongst Christians themselves. One of my learned predecessors has gone so far as to affirm, that owing to the numberless divisions which had arisen on points the most trifling and absurd, perverse contentions with each other, corruptness in opinion, and degeneracy in practice, "the Christians of this unhappy period retained little more than the name and external profession of their religion," and that in fact "scarce any vestige remained in these times of a Christian Church." In these corruptions and distresses of Christianity arose the great impostor of Arabia. To him, viewing the state of Christendom calmly from without, the idea might have suggested itself of the want of some religion sufficiently catholic to supply the spiritual wants of the whole human race. He might have observed that a system professing to have universal peace for one of its objects, instead of achieving this great and glorious end, was developing itself apparently in wars and tumults and social disturbances of every kind. Forming then his notions from the actual state of Christendom, the prophet of Mecca, whose only book was (we are told) "the book of nature and of man," may have

regarded Christianity as a failure on the part of its author and upholders to establish a *paramount* under the profession of an *universal* religious system. How far his own projects of dominion might bear comparison with the confident expectation of future empire entertained even by the least enthusiastic of the faithful followers of Christ, may admit of question; but it is certain that when points of difference disclose themselves between the laws of the pseudo-apostle of God and those of the Gospel, the former are seen to defer to the prejudices, and to pander to the grosser, which are sure to be the more general, inclinations of mankind. At all events the Koran exhibits in various parts a knowledge of the particulars of the current practical Christianity of the day, and betrays its own policy throughout in the adversative position which it takes up towards them. The articles of Priesthood and Sacrifice are peculiarly illustrative of this studied contrariety to the Christian model; whilst in fasting also, and even in prayer, the regulations of Mahomet are conceived so as to contrast as strongly as possible with the asceticism, formalism, and indolence, both bodily and mental, characterizing the bulk of the professing Christianity of the period.

In all these points the sagacity of the impostor is most conspicuous; for at the same time that by recognising the authority of Holy Scripture he so far propitiated the superficial professor both of Judaism and Christianity, he presented himself also to the more thinking in the character of a Reformer of religious abuses, which by obscuring the genuine religion of our Lord and His Apostles must have tended to bring their personal dignity into disrepute, and thus opened a door to success for those who might be audacious enough to put themselves forward as fulfilling in their own persons the Scripture promises of the Paraclete. Hence the great success which attended the pretensions of Mahomet has been not unfrequently attributed "to the circumstances of the times" by those who are slow to detect the finger of God, and His just indignation at the unchecked corruptions and almost universal degeneracy of His Church.

But since the only argument upon which Mahommedanism can dare a comparison of itself with Christianity is built upon its rapid propagation and establishment, (which is at best but a questionable *note* of a true religion or Church, even at the present stage of history,) I must be content to refer my younger

hearers to the discourses to which I have once already made allusion for an account of the *different circumstances* under which both religions were so widely diffused, and for the arguments whereby "the superiority of the religion taught by Christ over that of Mahomet is made sufficiently apparent to justify our approbation of the one and our rejection of the other."

III. Nor can we bestow more than a glance upon the third event selected, the all-important æra of the Reformation. In the revival of learning and general awakenment of a spirit of inquiry which marked that period of man's history, we detect at once a happy promise of future triumph for the doctrines of Revelation. This, however, could not exist without a proportionate advantage accruing to the department of the Evidences; and so, in fact, the vital principles of the Reformation will be found, upon fair examination, to involve of necessity the amplest security both for the promulgation and the perpetuation of the genuine proofs of true religion. "The Reformation," says a living writer, "springs forth and appeals to the Divine records, collects fresh evidences, reassumes truth, sweeps away the incumbrance of human tradition, exhibits Christianity to the faith and obe-

dience of mankind. The lives and deaths of the reformers, the effects of their doctrine, the accomplishment of the grace of Revelation in its operations upon the human heart, are appealed to, and place the evidences of Christianity in a new blaze of glory. What superstition and ignorance had wrought for ten centuries is overthrown; and Christianity appears fresh and vigorous, and sacred as at its first birth."

To this I would merely add, that the undisputed and indisputable fact, that at the æra of the Reformation both the great parties were in earnest, is sufficient for the historical argument arising from that great movement, in so far as it affects the truth of the Christian religion in general. And here again, as at every stage before, might the fulfilment of prophecy be brought to strengthen the evidences resulting to Christianity from the occurrences of the period in question. The earnestness of the struggle between the Protestant communities and that of Rome, I would say, is not to be accounted for by any collateral circumstances, political or personal; some of which doubtless, we must allow, contributed to augment its obstinacy when the conflict had once begun. The main reasons which produced the Reformation had been

accumulating for ages, and reached their head long before these minor influences gave, or could give, the slightest tokens of their existence. The whole movement must be regarded as an exemplification of two momentous truths: one, the paramount interest which has ever attached to religion in the minds of the most thoughtful nations of the world;—the other, the interposition of the Supreme Being, on occasions which even to the eye of human estimation appear the meetest for the display of His extraordinary care. The latter of these is the more obviously connected with our immediate subject. Although a review of the course of events from the twelfth century (or we might go farther back perhaps) would abundantly shew that the way had been long preparing for the release of Western Europe from the increasing corruptions of Christianity,—fostered, as they had in the main been introduced also, by the see of Rome; yet the great separation made in the sixteenth century must be regarded as the immediate effect of a distinct and special interposition of Divine Providence. Accordingly, *most* perspicacious and candid historians and critics have awarded to the eminent leaders of the Reformation a place in the history of the world, to which

the only parallel in many respects is afforded by the case of the immediate followers of our Lord Himself. However deserving of our regard and veneration many of the distinguished individuals who defended and adorned the Church of Christ in the æra of the Apologists, or down the subsequent ages of scholasticism, still they stand out simply as individuals. Here and there, it is true, we discover men impressed with the essential characters of Christianity, and offering splendid exceptions to the general corruption, moral and spiritual, in which the whole of Christendom was immersed. But no single age or period in the annals of Christianity, before or since, can be fixed upon, offering to view any considerable combination of men animated with the desire of restoring pure religion; far less such a galaxy of learning, wisdom, piety, and Christian courage, as constitute at once the distinguishing feature and the glory of the period in question.

Of little avail then is it, in despite of the testimony of such men, and the victory which they gained, to talk of the integrity of Catholic developments, as marking the progress of history in the times between the Apostles and Luther,—in any sense, I mean, which shall be useful for the particular purposes of

any single church. For if that view of the subject of which we have of late heard so much were conceded, what reason can be assigned for the abrupt termination of all doctrinal development at the precise æra of the council of Trent? We are not pressed, at least, with the allegation of any considerable developments since. Either then we must conclude that a power asserted to be essential to the vitality of the church, has been ever since suspended; or that the developing process in question can be no essential function of the true church.—True, most true it is, that the Catholic Church is, and must be, continually developing truth; but it is in that sense only in which truth of doctrine needs be developed, and in which it always will and must develope itself—in the beauty of practical holiness. In this sense she is of a certainty "ever greater than the emergence," whether of national or individual necessity. In this sense she can "extract good from evil" always. It is thus, because she is under the affectionate, constant, vigilant guardianship of her heavenly Head, that she does (to transfer the allusion made use of by the distinguished author, or rather *modifier* of the doctrine of development in religious truth, in whom ourselves in this place naturally

take most interest) "inherit the promise made to the disciples that they should take up serpents, and if they drank any [a]deadly thing it should not hurt them—when evil has clung to her, and the barbarian people have looked with curiosity, or in malice, till she should have swollen or fallen down suddenly, she has shaken the venomous beast into the fire, and felt no harm."

If then it be in our power, as it is, with reference to our own branch of Christ's holy Catholic Church, to apply such words as these to her continuance—if, notwithstanding the frequent occasions on which she has unhappily (if indeed trials can be thought to constitute unhappiness) been called upon to repel open aggression, or to unmask and baffle the designs of the insidious, it has been her destiny to increase in strength, to enlarge her border, and thus to appropriate to herself one at least of the desiderated attributes of Catholicism—well may we, my brethren, and all her sons be content with the blessed privilege of having grown up in her communion; nor may we lightly reject the conviction of many a learned and pious mind, that such results can have flowed only

[a] Mark xvi. 18.

from the fixed principles of a sound and enlightened piety, which, whether they were fully understood or not by the personages most active and influential at the time of the Reformation, were yet appointed by the Supreme Will to bring forth in due time a kindly and abundant harvest—presenting to the gaze and admiration of civilized humanity a system of belief and practice, equally removed from the captious narrow-mindedness of the Puritan, and the audacious flights of a latitudinarian idealism.

I will only remark, in conclusion, as being in harmony with our earliest observations, that the portion of our subject which has engaged our thoughts to-day presents one of those cases where the matter itself of a question supplies to a certain degree its own best evidence. With our ineradicable convictions of the Divine Nature, and our consciousness of the perceptions included in our own mental constitution, we at least feel the force of the general argument from the Bible history, when we observe how it exhibits throughout its pages the acknowledged perfections of the one, and an exact and, as it were, studied conformity to the condition and necessities of the other. And deeply sensitive has Infidelity shewn itself of this undeniable pecu-

liarity of the sacred record. The chief endeavour therefore of unbelievers has commonly been to parry the argument from thence resulting by the allegation, that the Divine counsels, as we represent them, have undergone changes from time to time, and thus proved themselves incompatible with the character of a Being, in whom the Christian asserts with the Apostle that "there is no variableness, or shadow of turning[b]." The discernment and recognition of that unity which our remarks would represent as pervading the Divine government throughout all its dispensations, is in itself a complete answer to this objection; and whilst the objection is destroyed, a foundation is also visibly laid whereupon to raise the solid edifice of Christian Truth, which is thus shewn to be as unchangeable as its Revealer and Author—even Jesus Christ—"the *Rock* of our salvation," "the *same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever[c]."

[b] James i. 17. [c] Heb. xiii. 8.

SERMON V.

Acts ii. 22.

. . . . . *Jesus Christ, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.*

THE general proof arising from a rapid survey of the history of the human race, and from that of the Jewish and Christian portions of it in particular, having occupied our attention on the last occasion, I now proceed to the consideration of certain special facts, which are commonly regarded as forming a peculiar body of evidences, tending in a direct course to the establishment of our faith in Christianity. By such facts I understand not only miracles, properly so called, but such other phenomena as may be reasonably associated with miracles, if not (as they have indeed sometimes been) actually designated by the same name.

It might not be superfluous, before entering upon the proposed investigation, to determine what, in theological language, is to be called a Fact. I shall not, however, affect precision in this particular. All that I would ask is, that a fact be conceived as taking place *in time*. With this simple limitation we at least clear the way a little, by excluding such truths as the eternal generation of the Son, the procession of the Holy Ghost, and the like, from the domain of facts; within which we nevertheless often find them comprehended by Theological writers. Certain truths also relating to *man*, such as original sin, justification, conversion, sanctification, and others, should in like manner, I think, be spoken of rather as doctrines than as facts.

The removal of such mysterious and comprehensive truths as have been just specified from the region of Facts will still leave untouched a vast number of phenomena possessed of a sufficiently complex character, and which we may, if we please, call, by way way of distinction, complex facts. To this class belong prophecies and types, which, as distinguished from common miracles, require, it is obvious, the double proof of the earlier delivery or enactment, and of the subsequent

fulfilment, in order to their completeness, and are consequently, in the strictest sense, complex facts. The present discourse will, however, for convenience sake, take both prophecies and types as falling for the most part under the generic head of Miracles:—to which important subject, or division of the evidences, it is my business now, in accordance with the requirements of my general plan, to desire your attention.

It is a remark of Bishop Horsley, when speaking of the Gospel facts, or facts recorded by the Evangelists, that they are not the ground of the common faith of believers, for that although no facts of equal antiquity can boast a historical evidence equally complete, yet but few persons have leisure or light enough to scrutinize this; and that accordingly "in the degree in which such evidences may be supposed to strike the generality of believers, it seems to be that which may rather furnish a proof begun in other principles, than make by itself an entire demonstration." Many divines have extended a like observation from the Gospel facts to all other facts of Scripture, adducible in the way of evidence for the sacred truth.

The correctness of such statements I am not concerned to call in question; for it will

be doubtless remembered that they harmonize readily with the views which I have ventured to put forward on former occasions. And it is indeed one of the purposes of the present Lectures to shew, that the external and internal evidences must be associated, cemented, and welded together (so to speak), in order to form the defences of Revelation. The consideration of facts would seem then aptly to follow the notice of those principles or general grounds of conviction with which all men must, it seems, be in greater or less degree provided, whenever they address themselves to the argumentative appreciation of any facts whatsoever; and a proper review and adjustment of which are preeminently required, when the object may be to apply them to the consideration of those *extraordinary* facts, to which the Christian reasoner appeals, as affording, if not the strongest, at least a very powerful proof of the Divine origin of his faith.

Reverting then for a moment to the acknowledged existence of such anticipations in all human minds, the great question, with respect to miracles, would seem to be, Are miracles to be expected? Now, I conceive, the answer to this question may be determined by the answer we feel at liberty to

give to another, and which I may call the previous question, Is a Revelation from God to be expected? The answer to which will again depend upon our preconceptions of the Divine attributes. For if we are impressed (as it will be remembered has been assumed by us all along) with a belief in the goodness of God, we cannot deny the great probability of a Revelation, under the known circumstances of our race. In other words, we may *expect* one. But a Revelation is itself, we must remember, a miraculous fact; and would therefore, as such, be most suitably accompanied and attested by facts of a similar character. It seems unnecessary to draw the formal inference resulting from these few propositions.

But there is another presumption which we also carry with us to the consideration of the Scripture facts in general; that is, not to miraculous events only, but also to many other recorded acts of God in the administration of the world. This is the admission of the superiority of Moral to Physical concerns, whenever the two may be brought into comparison or collision with each other. So wonderful indeed is the adaptation of the natural world and its laws to the good of man, that the stores of proof flowing in from

this single source of Evidence to establish the benevolence of God towards him appear to be positively inexhaustible. The Infidel and the Deist however, we know, frame an argument to serve their purposes from the very constancy of these laws, trying to shew that their operation can under no imaginable circumstances be interrupted. But as they seem at all times ready to admit that these laws are themselves ordained to subserve a *moral* purpose, we might fairly call upon them to allow that the operation of such laws may be suspended, in conjunctures when a moral end worthy of the Deity, or at least corresponding with our common and reasonable conceptions of Him, is to be answered. The process of meditation should therefore be of this sort. First, in order to test the nature of the narrated miracle (if that be the fact in question) we should ascertain the difficulties of a physical kind necessary to be overcome, and then consider and weigh the importance of the alleged or apparent end for which it is recorded to have been wrought. The advocate of the Christian miracles challenges an inquiry of this sort, and is confident that the end will always in their case render probable the asserted interposition of Divine agency, however in fact as well as in appear-

ance disturbing, or even counteracting the Laws of Nature.

The argument from miracles would, upon the ground afforded by these presumptions, appear to be so simple, intelligible and direct, that we might expect it to command at once the assent of all persons to whom it might be addressed. But so far from this being the case, more than eighteen hundred years now have passed since the Apostolic miracles of which we possess the record were enacted, and men are yet disputing their reality, the *probability*, nay even the *possibility* of their performance. It will not then be superfluous to bestow a few brief observations on this familiar, yet, as it would appear, never-to-be-exhausted subject.

I think it quite unnecessary to dwell before my present auditory upon the lines of argument supplied by the various contrasts of the New Testament Miracles with other like occurrences recorded or supposed to have taken place in different countries, and under circumstances more or less dissimilar: such, e. g. as the heathen prodigies, the pretended miracles of Apollonius and of Mahomet; to which may unquestionably be added those of the Romish Church, said to

have been wrought whether in past ages or in our own: the want of satisfactory Evidence to all of which has been sufficiently ascertained by those who with the requisite qualifications of carefulness, perspicacity, judgment and honesty have applied themselves to their examination.

Nor shall I do more than make brief allusion to the argument to be gathered from a comparison of the miracles of our Blessed Lord and his Apostles with those which alone admit of being reasonably set side by side with them; I mean the miracles of Moses, "[a]the faithful servant" of God. How all such comparisons, whenever they are fairly made, redound to the glory of the facts accompanying the Christian Dispensation, may be assumed as a point long since placed beyond dispute.

Narrowing in then the question so as to comprise within our scope the New Testament miracles only, let me advert to those forms of objection which have come uppermost in our own day, and which by some, and most frequently by the young, are deemed of force sufficient to shake their belief in the reality of those miracles, and consequently so far to

[a] Heb. iii. 2, 5; Rev. xv. 3.

invalidate the structure of proof which they have been from their earliest years accustomed to rest upon them.

Of the views alluded to, two present themselves as most deserving our consideration; both, it will be seen, affecting intimately and vitally the contents of the Sacred Volume, and thereby, by implication, the essence of the faith itself; but differing from each other, in that one arraigns the argument from miracles on *a priori* grounds, and calls in question the reality of their performance; whereas the other admits the occurrence of the facts, but denies that they were *intended* to prove the Inspiration of the workers of the miracles; or, in other words, to serve as credentials of their Divine authority. This latter objection does not differ widely from the former in its logical character, being drawn from the kindred topic of *final causes.*

I. Let us take then the first of these objections which unbelievers in the present day are peculiarly fond of advancing in disparagement or in denial of the New Testament miracles. Is it to be supposed, say they, that God would have had recourse to the display of such phenomena in attestation to the Divine authority of Christ and his disciples? What would this be but to constitute the

feeling of *surprise* or *astonishment* in a few persons, and these belonging to a weak and credulous period in the annals of mankind, the security for the constant unintermitted faith of all future generations; a poor expedient surely for Omniscience to adopt with the view of accomplishing the great end with which the Christian connects these Scripture miracles, or indeed *any* grand or worthy result?—Thus summarily is the argument from miracles in support of the Christian Religion disposed of by some in this our age of boasted wisdom and intelligence.

It is generally best to answer an objection, if we can, by making one part of it destructive of others, or at least of the general effect of the whole; else, in the present case, we might begin with denying that astonishment is the only feeling produced in the minds of those who witness, as they imagine, a display of supernatural power. Let us however concede that wonder is the only feeling excited. Doubtless the Scripture narrative speaks very strongly with reference to the operation of this feeling in the cases alluded to. Jesus "was casting out a devil; and it was dumb; and it came to pass that when the devil was gone out, the dumb spoke[b];" and the peo-

[b] Luke xi. 14.

ple, we are told, "wondered." On other occasions they are said to have been "amazed[c]," to have been "astonished," nay, to have been "astonished with great astonishment[d]." Let us suppose, I say, that this feeling so dwelt upon by the sacred writers was the only feeling aroused on those occasions;—how long, it may be asked, has the feeling of wonder been the necessary token of ignorance, or of an uninquiring credulity? No doubt it often accompanies these states, but the operation of the feeling is so far from being confined to such conditions, that it interposes in almost all the greater employments of the human faculties:—or do the objectors whom I have in view mean that the "collective maturity," of which they are so fond of speaking as appertaining to the present condition of the human intellect, is identical with the stolid old *nil admirari* philosophy in its literal sense? Is not rather the feeling of wonder akin to the principle of philosophical inquiry itself? Such at least is the opinion of the most accurate observers of the human mind: and even the eminent prelate (already mentioned to-day) who lashes with unsparing severity those Jews who simply wondered, that is, (as he expresses it,)

[c] Mark ii. 12; Luke iv. 36. [d] Mark v. 42.

"whose wonder ended in wondering," and was "satisfied with wondering," declares that the same feeling, connected with a principle of rational "curiosity," (and this, I presume, is possessed, to a certain extent at least, by most men,) is the source of all knowledge and discovery, and "is a principle even of piety" itself.

Granted then, I repeat, that the emotion of wonder is the only one excited in our minds on such occasions as the apparent suspension or counteraction of the laws of nature; yet it is not that vague, unreasoning, undiscriminating kind of wonder which is necessary for the vitality of the objection. The feeling may indeed be strong, but it is regulated and controlled by the various considerations which we read and know to have accompanied it in the case of the actual witnesses of the New Testament miracles; and the combination of which considerations, not the simple miraculous operation itself, forms, in reality, the strength of the argument thence deduced in favour of the Christian religion. If mere astonishment, of whatever degree, were made the sole criterion of miraculous intervention, it would be obviously impossible to distinguish in this respect between the miracles and the doctrines of our

blessed Lord. For as we read of the astonishment of the eye-witnesses of his "signs and wonders," so do we read also that they were "astonished at his doctrine [d];"—as well indeed they might, when he confounded Pharisee and Sadducee, lawyer and scribe, by the wisdom and authority with which he taught, by speaking "as never man spake [e]." Since it must not escape us that the very same persons who impugn his miracles, are, or affect to be, admirers of his teaching. Where then, it may be demanded of them, is the precise point of elevation at which the sentiment of wonder detects and attests the presence of Deity in the manifestation of miraculous power? Or will it be contended that the sensation of amazement is different *in kind*, when produced by the hearing of a doctrine, from what it is when awakened by the ocular evidence of apparently supernatural agencies? Surely it must be evident to sober reason, that in so far as the element of astonishment or wonder is concerned, the two subjects, the works, namely, and the teaching of our Lord, must stand on exactly the same footing. In a word, they must both be rejected or accepted together.

[d] Mark x. 24; Luke ii. 47, &c. [e] John vii. 46.

And here, in the way of a subordinate argument, not without effect upon some minds, might be introduced the striking coincidence observed to exist between many of the miracles performed by our Lord and his Apostles, and the doctrine which for the time being they were enforcing. Without going at all into this argument, I may affirm that it offers, beyond dispute, another presumption or probable proof of the credibility of facts, which are thus seen to resemble in complexion the moral and religious precepts which they seem to sanction. But with reference to such remarkable connection between the doctrines and the miracles of the Gospel, I cannot withhold the remark, that infidels in general do not seem to reflect how much they are in fact conceding when they grant that our Lord was a preeminently good man. It cannot surely be consistent with exalted virtue, to make professions at variance with truth. And it is undeniable that our Lord laid claim to more than human knowledge, and to a commission from his Father to teach it to the world. "The woman" of Samaria "saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ, when he is come, *he will tell us all things*. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee

am He[f]." This is only one of many places in which he claims a knowledge not only superhuman, but divine.

And, as if to meet an objection which might be raised to the testimony which he thus gives to himself, he at another time says, "Which of you convinceth me of sin[g]?" meaning probably by "sin," any evil deed or moral blemish, the taint of which must in all cases weaken more or less the credibility of a witness, and particularly of one who is a witness in his own case. His moral character then being unsullied, and without possible reproach, the infidel should surely proceed without prejudice to examine into the other grounds of his claims to superhuman dignity. And these are, in one word, his Works, and amongst them the very miracles of which we are speaking. To these he himself appeals expressly, as affording the strongest evidences of his Divine mission. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the *very works' sake*[h]."

Similar observations may be extended to the chosen followers of our Lord also, allowance being made for the difference of their

[f] John iv. 25. [g] John viii. 46. [h] John xiv. 10, 11.

testifying not to themselves, but to their Lord and Master;—a difference, however, which may be thought to increase rather than diminish the weight of the present argument in their case.

But to return. It is further asserted that, be the effect of the New Testament miracles what it might at the times of their alleged performance, they would produce nothing like the same sensation if they were performed now. This is perhaps an erroneous assertion altogether. At any rate, if we defer to the express judgment of the most acute observers of the human mind, we shall rather be disposed to regard our Lord's own declaration in the parable, where he is comparing the evidence produced by the most stupendous miracle with the testimony of "Moses and the prophets[a]," as applicable with equal justice to all the generations of mankind. I shall however deal with the objection as emanating from those who have apparently attached themselves to the school of Spinoza, since it turns, we may well see, upon one of the distinguishing dogmas of the unbelieving system of that philosopher.

When viewed in this connexion, the objection in question strikes at the very root of all the Christian, and indeed all other

[a] Luke xvi. 29.

arguments from miracles; making the ignorance of man to be their entire refutation, upon the maxim of equipollence (as it is called); in other words, of an exact parallelism which he maintains to exist between the ignorance of man, and his belief in the existence and operation of miraculous agencies. Did we know the powers of nature, Spinoza argues, we should find that they are equal to all the products which we ignorantly call supernatural; and should the believer adduce the most wondrous works of our Lord, and assert that these were not and could not be the effects of any natural laws, he is still met by the stubborn fact of his own ignorance, and analogies are poured in upon him to shew that the rareness or magnitude of an event does not disprove its probable origin in mere natural causes. And perhaps there is no better, at least no safer, mode of encountering the untoward objection at this stage, than for the advocate of the New Testament miracles to insist on the extreme *unlikelihood* of nature thus manifesting herself, without any apparent object or prospective result, in instances of such unwonted operation, and to go on to raise the more general and truly fundamental question, which, as it involves the determination

of the true relation of nature to God, can only be solved by assigning to the former those bounds, be they ever so far beyond her ordinary sphere of action, which the Reason of all but the atheist must sooner or later be brought to allow that she can never pass.

But is it true that the ignorance of man and the powers of nature are both thus perplexingly unlimited? or rather, do not the limits of mere natural power fall within the cognizance of ordinary persons, such as were the beholders of the Christian miracles? Let us grant, by way of supposition, that the question between the powers of nature and the immediate agency of the Deity is a question of degree merely. Does it follow, we may ask, that it should be impossible for man to draw some line between them? On this point let me take an illustration from a sagacious writer on statistics. In the advocacy of his own theory, it was necessary for him to refute the speculations of another school; which, amidst other wild notions of the unlimited powers of the human being, had contended for his organic perfectibility. This view had been supported upon analogies afforded by the animal and vegetable world, and had been (singularly enough, when viewed in this connexion) applied in parti-

cular to the duration of human life. The observed effects of diet, habit, climate, &c., had furnished a pretext for the anticipation of its indefinite extension at some future periods of the history of our race. The perfectionist, in fact, had inferred that the possible prolongation of human life was indefinite or unlimited. The detection of the fallacy turned, as we might suppose, upon the definition or idea of the word unlimited; and the extreme consequences of the speculation were satisfactorily refuted, not indeed by shewing at what point precisely improvement might arrive, but by fixing upon one which it could never reach; by shewing, in short, that indefinable progress is not to be confounded with progress *ad infinitum*. And so "to raise the dead to life, to cure the most violent and inveterate diseases by speaking a word only, to walk on the surface of a stormy sea, who," says Beattie, "can doubt at all that works such as these must require the present power of the Lord and Author of all nature for their performance?" But if there could be doubt respecting these, suppose one who, having been "crucified in the presence of a great multitude, and ascertained to be dead, and after lying part of three days in the grave arose to life, reani-

mated the body which had been mangled on the cross, passed forty days on earth after his resurrection, during which time he frequently conversed with his disciples, and at last in open day, and whilst he was speaking to them, visibly ascended into heaven;" what law or principle of the human mind is so extravagant as to ascribe so stupendous a deviation from the course of nature to other than Divine power? Surely, the preaching of the Apostles may be a sufficient comment on this last and most extraordinary miracle! They did not, it is most evident, consider themselves, nor can we consider them, to have been *deceived* in their notions of miraculous phenomena. The question then transforms itself into the doubt, whether they were *deceivers?* that is, we pass from a physical to a moral consideration. But here, if the Apostles were deceivers, we have the marvellous fact of men practising for years a system of deception without any assignable ends or motives for so doing. Ends and motives, we know, fall within the province of ethics. If then we fasten the charge, or attach the suspicion of imposture to the Apostles and Evangelists—and the same may be said, with allowances for the circumstances in each several case, of the first ages of

Christianity—of the entire roll of its centuries—of the Christian church and ministry throughout; if, in a word, we agitate the question of priestcraft in any shape, we must be prepared with our theory of moral motives, and shew (which unbelievers have hitherto failed to do) that the interest of the first preachers and martyrs of Christianity lay in diametrical opposition both to the spirit and letter of a singularly pure and elevated system of morality as well as religion —a system which they were ready to uphold through the most complicated sufferings, and finally to seal with their life-blood. The popular treatises in the hands of most educated persons in this country may be referred to as following out this most important argument.

But after all it is to be feared that the real objection lurking under all these alleged difficulties is not so much the *improbability* of the evangelical and apostolic miracles, as their *impossibility*, or (which practically amounts to the same thing) the impossibility of our proving them to have been wrought. The reasoning of Hume still lies at the bottom of most of the misgivings. Like him, the generality of infidels in these days do not candidly and openly call in question the

possibility of God's altering the course of his Providence in circumstances of moral exigency, but they virtually do the same by exalting in various ways the potency of nature. Mere physical impugners indeed go at once to the point, and honestly maintain the supremacy and inflexibility of those laws, thus demolishing or striking at the theory of miracles altogether. But the more moderate and subtler class prefer to array probability against probability, testimony against testimony, experience against experience, professing to be governed by the preponderating influence in each respective scale. Such, or similar, was the course of their great master. The argument of Hume does not (as some have stated it) contrast experience with testimony, as different kinds of evidence, but experience with experience, taken as the same evidence; and thus though its subtlety is rendered perhaps greater, it yet supplies the elements of its own destruction. For surely we may answer that the experience of the greater number (which is all that can be said in favour of the laws of nature) does not necessarily outweigh the experience of the few, (which is the case of miracles;) and it is futile, when reviewing the whole history of past events, to poll the superior number of

instances, as affecting a question where, as in the case of Divine interference, the events are necessarily and avowedly of the nature of exceptions to the general dealings of the Deity, and accordingly, i. e. from the nature of the case, admit of only a limited numerical attestation. The testimony which is required in order to substantiate the performance of miracles, and the testimony which assures us of the laws of nature being uniform and peremptory, when we ourselves are absent or non-observant, are of the same kind precisely; and by attention to the rules of moral evidence, and the criteria of true and false miracles as they appear in the writings of many writers which our own Church and country have produced, we are enabled to establish the miracles involved in our present question against the successive hosts of infidels, who, with but very little variety of weapons, continue from age to age to assail them.

II. The other class of objectors alluded to do not dispute the reality of the Christian miracles, but, allowing their actual performance, yet deny the validity of the inference we draw from them. They would represent the Divine authority of the first preachers of Christianity as only *one of many* probable

hypotheses, which would equally account for the interposition or exertion of supernatural power. Miracles, they say, for instance, *may* have been wrought for the purpose of proving the inspiration of the workers of them, but many other final causes may be conceived of at least equal probability. But what these probable hypotheses are, and which of them is *more* probable than that which the uninterrupted belief of the Christian Church for nearly two thousand years has sanctioned, they are slow and, possibly, unable to specify. In the absence then of any competing hypothesis possessing greater claims upon our reception, assuredly we are at liberty—nay, is it not, and must it not be, our duty?—to be contented with our own hypothesis, whether we regard its own intrinsic grounds of credibility, or take it in comparison with those lesser degrees of probability which attach to other hypotheses adventurously adduced in opposition.

And I have said, the "uninterrupted belief" of so many centuries, because it is necessary to bear in mind in this question, that the silence of those, who, avowing their belief in Christianity, and their respect for the books of the New Testament, have not disputed the miraculous accounts which they

contain, is a very strong proof of the truth of such accounts. We may thus, in fact, consider each successive generation of the early Christians as adding their own testimony to that of their predecessors, and, as it were, repeating the Evangelical narratives in their own persons; whereas of one, and that the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of our Lord—the Christian religion itself, we may affirm, is in reality its impress and representation; respecting which miracle indeed there was and could be no silence, since we cannot so disparage as to count it merely as an evidence; it being much more than this, both the grand stimulant to Christian obedience, and the guarantee of our own hoped for immortality.

We can argue then as well from the omission as from the notice of the miracles in the case of the Christians at the period referred to. And the argument is capable of being directed against two sorts of objections; the one, which would make the evidence of miracles (not however, without equally affecting at the same time all history) become fainter and fainter in exact proportion as we recede from the time of their alleged performance, (an objection which I do not deem worthy of a studied refutation)—and the other already,

it is to be hoped, adequately refuted by the countrymen of the daring Neologist who invented it—a theory, namely, which would fain bring the miracles of our Lord and his Apostles within the fantastic mazes of a *mythical* interpretation, and account for their being inserted into the sacred narrative upon the dishonourable principle of an *ex post facto* accommodation, accomplished by some inexplicable *finesse* or artful legerdemain; for such it must have been to have escaped contemporaneous detection and exposure on the part of the earlier keepers of the writings of the New Testament.

Other objections there are, or cavils rather, which would not deserve even a passing notice, were they not circulated industriously in the present day, and even amongst ourselves. For example, it is said that miracles, being addressed to the senses, are *transient*, and that truth, spiritual truth, is eternal; from which it is sought to be inferred that the latter can derive no support from the former:—as though the Christian reasoner drew the truths of Revelation in the way of logical deductions directly from the miracles, instead of receiving them upon the sole authority of the revealer. The objector should go on to shew, either that there are

other means, totally independent of the operation of sense, by which a teacher professing to come from God can prove his commission, or that the coming of such teacher was never to be expected. But it is out of his power to do either.

Did the present inquiry profess to observe a strictly systematic course, and assume also to comprehend within its range the consideration of every element of Evidence, this perhaps would be the place for inserting the arguments resulting from the cases of special prophecies manifestly fulfilled; a view to be contradistinguished to the general notices of prophecy submitted in the last Lecture.—But into this department it is scarcely possible to enter; and so also must the question be altogether omitted, which of the two, Prophecy or Miracles, affords the *stronger* Evidence for the truth of Revelation.—Philosophically regarded, it is obvious, that these two branches of proof reciprocally imply and involve each other; since every prophecy is miraculous in its character, and every miracle again implies a prescience of the accomplishment of the intended effect. But were we to consider the matter of their comparative importance more closely, we might see how painful the agitation of such a question is calculated to

be to pious minds, as was indeed exemplified forcibly in the times of bishop Sherlock and Middleton. No doubt the more important point to settle is, the real value of each argument taken by itself, or absolutely. But we must remember that the Infidel, fully aware of the different force of the same arguments in different assemblies, is often careful to ascertain to a nicety the comparative weight of separate Evidences, when balanced against each other. It is therefore the duty of the Christian advocate (and, we may add, of every Christian pastor) occasionally also to engage in such speculations; since, although he relies upon the combined force of all the Evidences of Revealed Truth taken together, he may yet, from the uncertainty of his communications, be positively interested in estimating the value of each and every tributary source of proof whatever.

It must be admitted, however, that a line of reasoning which connects prophecy with miracle is not without its uses, being available in many ways, and more particularly in our controversy with the Jews. For we are thus enabled to press the *argumentum ad hominem* against them with considerable force.—"You believe *your law*," we say to the Jew, "of which you cannot shew that there was any

prophetical intimation at all, and you are content therefore to believe it upon the single ground of miracles. Why then should not we believe the religion of Jesus Christ, upon the like ground of signal and stupendous miracles performed by its Founder and his delegates? This we might do independently and apart from any prophecies and their accomplishments. But we do not choose to sever the two branches of Evidence from each other, nor can we allow you to do so. For although we may suffer you (supposing you to have a choice) to dispense with prophecy in the establishment of your law, you must not and cannot, if you would be consistent, disregard it when considering the miracles of Jesus Christ. And why? Clearly because you profess to believe in those predictions of the Old Testament which describe the nature of the miracles to be performed by the promised Messiah. In this case then the miracles fall under and may be said to be comprehended in the head of Prophecy. The testimony of Prophecy ought here, therefore, to have peculiar weight upon your minds, and instead of comparing in a partial and self-complacent spirit the miracles of the Gospel history with the actual appearances of Jehovah on mount Sinai, (although we by no means shrink from

such comparison, when fairly made,) rather should you carefully and honestly compare the prophecies concerning the Messiah's miracles with the recorded acts of Jesus, as he himself, in fact, did in the synagogue at Nazareth; and not till after such comparison reject his claims to the Messiahship. For how does the case really stand? You must either acknowledge Jesus, as fulfilling all those predictions, to be your long-expected Prophet, Priest and King; or you must deny the attributes of Jehovah himself—attributes which even the Gentile recognises in the God of his mere natural Religion. "For is it an imagination," writes Dean Stanhope, "to be entertained, nay so much as to be endured, by any who think reverently of God, that a work of love and wonder, so great as the sending his Son to redeem the world, should be in agitation full four thousand years; that each succeeding age in this long space should have some notice of it; that the several characters he was to sustain should be parcelled out to be communicated by so many different hands, living at times and places so remote, that any confederacy between them was absolutely impossible; that each in his turn should, if I may so say, draw a feature, and leave a distinguishing stroke behind him; that one should de-

scribe his parentage, another the time, another the place, another the uncommon manner of his birth; some the most remarkable actions and events of his life; several the most minute and altogether singular circumstances of his death; others his resurrection, nay the very day of it; others his ascent to the throne of God, and the perpetual duration of his kingdom; that all this should be done, not in words only, but the more to awaken men's observation in facts too; that besides a worship, a temple, a city and state typically prophetical, several eminent persons should be raised up, like so many sketches or rough imperfect draughts, copies and models in little, resembling this eminent Prophet, Priest and King; some in one lineament or capacity, some in another:—but above all, that every one of these strokes or touches should be divided by the unerring hand of God to make at last one finished picture; on purpose that the original, when brought in view, might be infallibly known, by being compared with these lines and characters, drawn at least four hundred years before:—that the salvation of thousands of millions of souls should depend upon acknowledging the person thus typified and foretold; and yet that the lover

of souls and the God of truth should appoint, nay, or so much as permit any person to be in every part and time exactly like that piece, who was not the very designed original;—this, I say, take it altogether, is an imagination so infinitely absurd, that it at once overturns all our notions of the wisdom and truth and goodness of God. It does not only contradict the great intent of all revealed religion, but can never be admitted without violence and manifest affront to natural reason itself." I will not weaken the force and pointedness of this apostrophe by a single observation.

It will have been remarked that I have not, either in this or the preceding Lecture, affected to determine with precision the *order* of evidence, with reference to its different degrees of influence upon the minds of men in general. In connexion with the present division of my subject, however, it should be stated, that the Christian Divine, whatever may be his success in establishing the truth of miracles, coincides with the popular view, which assigns to the evidence of sense the highest position in the scale of proof. And he does so, because in all languages, (and the language of men is no inconsiderable index in such cases,) as well as in the teaching of

Holy Scripture and of the Church, the evidence afforded by the senses is made the measure and standard by which the cogency of all other kinds of evidence is estimated. And whenever religious, or social, or moral matters are in question, this is universally and unavoidably the case. In accordance with which principle the evidence of miracles has been treated all along in the simple light of sensible proof, inherited without intermission from that chosen generation whose privilege it was to be permitted to witness these liveliest and most incontrovertible manifestations of the immediate presence of God. To minds impressed with a very strong philosophical character, I grant, the exaltation of the evidence of sense may be distasteful, inasmuch as it would appear to carry with it consequences derogatory to the dignity of the intellect. But whatever be the convictions of such persons, the evidence in question must receive that amount of consideration and deference which we find actually paid to it in Holy Writ, no less than in the ordinary conduct of our affairs. It comprehends indeed all the direct proofs of Revelation, and has often, accordingly, under judicious management triumphed over the captiousness of a minute and shallow philo-

sophy. But were every other defence of this species of evidence to be abandoned, there would still remain the indisputable fact, that multitudes are incapable of forming a conception of the proof of *any* revelation, except as connected with miraculous agency of some sort; if indeed by far the majority of believers do not rest their faith upon the ground of the Scripture miracles, as the only proper and direct proofs which can be advanced in defence of their Christian profession.

Nor have I discussed in a formal manner the evidence of *testimony*, which forms the connecting link between ourselves and the eye and ear-witnesses of the evangelical signs and wonders. A brief examination of this kind of proof would shew that it is not quite so simple a ground of belief as many may be disposed to think it, but that it owes its validity to principles, the existence and importance of which were admitted at a very early stage of our meditations. Were we to analyse the case of testimony, we should find it resolve itself into various elements of our own complex nature. Sense and memory, which are obviously indispensable, may be set down among its *intellectual* ingredients. But these were of little avail, did we not add

thereto an instinctive love of truth, and a disposition to veracity, together with so much natural probity in the witness as is indicated by the feeling of shame and degradation in the event of detection in falsehood. These are, on the other hand, *moral* qualities, and they are (as has been before assumed) original and untaught impulses of our nature. Such then are the powers whose action must be taken into account, whenever we address ourselves to a disputed case of human testimony. But under and behind them all lies also the conviction of a Divine attribute; since, as was also seen before, we have no reason for trusting our own senses or those of other men, unless it be the goodness of God, who will not, we think, suffer us to be deceived by them in matters of the greatest consequence to our peace and happiness. We may well wish this simple analysis of the nature of testimony had been more borne in mind by those who have speculated with greatest license on the subject of the Christian miracles.

Much might have been said also on behalf of an appeal to history and facts, had we found time to attend to the following briefly-stated considerations.

By proving Revelation to be a *fact*, all ela-

borate arguments for the necessity of a revelation are rendered superfluous; for besides that ἔχει τὸ γεγονὸς ἀνάγκην, God cannot be believed to do any thing which is not necessary—in the sense, that is, of what is necessary for his own purposes. And surely one strictly philosophical view of every fact is, that it must be instrumental to the completion or furtherance of some intention or other on the part of the Supreme Being, which property qualifies it to become also an *argument* for something else, although we may or may not be able to see it.

Again, we might, there is no doubt, by dwelling on the same and similar thoughts, turn to great account the consciousness or inward sense which we have of our own being, and more particularly of the existence within us of intellectual and moral capacities; inasmuch as if we reason from the presence of this inward faculty or consciousness, simply *as a fact* or effect, we may infer a cause of it; which cause or originating power is sure to be invested by us with far higher capacities of the same sort than a created being can possess. This is another philosophical aspect of the nature of every fact, which we can naturally or reasonably connect with the immediate agency or permission of

God. And the history of philosophy will shew how much some minds have been enabled to construct (with more or less amount of persuasiveness) upon the solitary datum afforded by the one only fact now alluded to.

Moreover, we must bear in mind that it is from the consideration of *facts* that we conclude also that the evidence of Christianity is a *growing* evidence. This argument involves a perpetual appeal to observation and sense; and is of incalculable value, whether we regard its nature or its amount. Time, instead of weakening it, keeps adding and adding unintermittingly to its bulk and vastness. Ages and generations may have had, indeed *have* had, their respective advantages; some seeing those things which others, less fortunate in this respect, have only "desired to see[f]." The balance, however, of evidence, upon the whole, stands pretty even between the earlier and later generations of Christian times. Each, in short, has had advantages and disadvantages peculiar to itself. If it partake of the latter character that we ourselves were not eye-witnesses of the "miracles and wonders and signs" spoken of in the text, yet by the inherited testimony which we possess, *we* "know" also that they were performed. We

[f] Matt. xiii. 17.

have the power of transferring ourselves in thought (as we must do indeed in every instance of our realizing the occurrences of the past to our mental vision), we may transport ourselves, it is plain, to the scenes of the Gospel narrative: and if there should be (to make a concession, which is by no means to be demanded in fairness) a certain diminution of the force of the argument from miracles, in proportion as we recede from the apostolic times, we may more than fill up the deficiency by the *variety* of proofs which the more recent ages supply, over and above the amount conceded to that particular period.

Something also admits of being offered on the connexion of miracles with the proof even of Natural Religion, although it is to be granted that in an ordinary way of viewing the question, miracles have no necessary bearing upon that subject. Nature herself proves as well as prompts her own specific articles of faith. Nevertheless, I know not who is at liberty to say that miracles may not at times be absolutely necessary for this purpose; when the dulness of most men's natural piety, and the various influences at work in all ages to corrupt and hebetate the religious principle, are fairly taken into consideration. *Possibly*, I mean, it may not be

enough that we should regard the testimony of miracles as furnishing "a new proof" of the Law of Nature, but something might be said in favor of the less obvious position, that the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ, in other words, the whole Gospel Revelation, affords not only additional, but also the best evidence (because capable of being immediately connected with *sensible* proof) of the Religion of Nature, as well as of the particular dispensations of Providence and Grace revealed to man under both covenants. Nevertheless it is decidedly safer and more accommodated to the condition of the generality of Christian minds to take the proof from miracles as running parallel, not to Natural, but to Revealed Religion only; in which point of view I have endeavoured to place it in the present inquiry.

But after all, it must be allowed, in conclusion, that there is a reversal of the scale, a sort of inverse ratio to be discovered, when we compare together the evidence of sense, and the proof afforded by the mere force of that faculty of religious perception which we would gladly allow to be an inseparable part of our mental essence. Although the strongest word which the Greek language supplies is employed in the text to denote the evidence

vouchsafed to the evangelical period, and notwithstanding that we assign the highest place in the scale of proof, *objectively* considered, to the evidence of sense, (and let it be enough to cite the cases of Nicodemus and the Apostle Thomas in confirmation); yet in a *subjective* point of view, and in a moral way of considering the matter, the faith of persons thus convinced does not rank so high as that which is the result of the spiritual sense, operating without either the aid or the necessity of any miraculous intervention at all. This will perhaps be more fully shewn hereafter. At the present time I can merely advert to the case of St. Peter, standing as it does in marked contrast with the slowness of belief which characterized his brother Apostle. But when we take into account the structure of men's minds in all ages over which our scrutiny can as yet extend, we shall be prepared, I fear, to acknowledge that the greatest number resemble that class which, "occupying the lowest stage of religious development," is well described as "utterly incapable of receiving a Divine revelation, except through the agency of a miracle." We may think then that a higher merit, as well as a greater blessedness, was actually assigned by Christ himself to "that faith

which" *may* have "flowed" (we will allow) "from the immediate recognition of the soul's highest aspirations," on that remarkable occasion when Peter, apart from the influence of miracles, uttered his conviction that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God[g]." Still we cannot on this account dispense with the argument from miracles, if we would set a just value on the conviction produced upon ordinary minds. The learned, the enthusiastic, the highly-gifted in soul, the heavenly minded, may possibly be won to their Redeemer by other sorts of evidence than the body of external proofs which have passed thus rapidly before us. Nevertheless, the more homely instrument of sensible proof is, and perhaps always will be, indispensable in the case of the masses; and their belief in the Saviour will, like that of the men of Israel to whom the words of the text were addressed, be grounded upon the assurance that the object of their faith was indeed "approved of God (ἀποδεδειγμένος) by miracles, and wonders, and signs."

[g] Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 69.

SERMON VI.

JOHN III. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

THE process of investigating the Christian evidences, varied though it must be according to the different objects, dispositions and abilities of those by whom it is undertaken, may yet be described, in a general way, as falling within the limits of a twofold description. The speculation may, as is the case also with many others, either commence *ab extra*, and terminate *in intimis;* or, conversely, taking its rise in that which is inmost, it may thence pursue an outward direction, until it arrive at the external view or surface. But by the external and superficial, which is also the popular aspect, we should

here mean, not only what writers ordinarily comprehend under the title of the External Evidences of Christianity, (although, as we have seen, it would be a hard task for the assailant of our holy faith to invalidate the separate and collective force even of these,) but every thing besides, which history, and the book of nature, when understood as comprising all the phenomena of the world without us, can contribute to the same purpose. From these external objects we may, I say, proceed in our mental survey to the recognition of the inner phenomena which they merely clothe or cover—drawing our line of circumference gradually nearer and nearer, so as ultimately—*περιγράφειν ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τοῦ πράγματος*—to enclose only the points most vital and lying nearest to the centre itself. Or again, we may, reversing the process, set out from that selfsame spiritual centre; the sun, as it were, of the system, the real source of all the light and warmth and life of which the subject is susceptible, and so move backward through the same series of intervening thoughts to the earliest stages of the other method:—viz. to those more obvious and familiar grounds of reasoning which are derivable immediately from the world of sense without. Both courses have had in every

age their respective advocates and eulogists; whilst many writers again, regardless of all forms whether of synthetical or analytical arrangement, have so blended and interwoven the external and internal evidences of Revelation with each other, as to divest the conduct of its proof of every semblance of systematic order; thus adopting a procedure in nowise perhaps inferior to others in practical efficacy, however distasteful it may be to most minds, from the absence of all those graces and recommendations which confessedly attach to the symmetry of an artistic method.

Now the matter which recently occupied our attention was of an *external* character; and consisted of such phenomena as are of most obvious occurrence in speculations which concern the evidences of the Gospel Revelation. We are next to transfer our attention for a while to the interior parts of the system, and more especially to the evidence arising from those spiritual influences which the religion of Christ professes to contain within it. For that this evidence should be ascertained is of the most extreme importance, inasmuch as the *doctrine* of the Holy Spirit with which it is closely combined is, I need hardly say, the great animating prin-

ciple of practical Christianity. It is in this doctrine that we discern the leaven intended for the leavening of the whole mass of fallen and corrupt humanity; it contains the well-spring of that eternal life which is the burthen of all the Gospel promises; and is at once the necessary source and the security for the fulfilment of all our aspirations after holiness and spiritual comfort, whether individual or collective.

It will be remembered, that in my opening Discourse I associated the branch of evidence now before us with the other proofs which are addressed to our understanding or reasoning powers; considering that the most commodious view of the Divine influences, as they present themselves in an inquiry of this sort, would regard them as supplying strength and clearness to the rational faculty, and not as superseding or eclipsing its natural and customary mode of action. We are still, accordingly, in the division of our subject in which the evidences are looked upon as addressing themselves to our reason; with this distinction, however, that they are now not brought under the cognizance of *mere* natural reason, but under the same power when in the enjoyment of the illumining and invigorating influences of the Spirit of God.

The *notion* of spiritual influences is clearly not peculiar to the Christian religion. Nevertheless, it is certain that what the Christian understands thereby is something quite different from any other traceable conceptions of the same subject, even when we follow down the evolution of the earlier dispensation to the chosen people. It may be difficult perhaps for us to imagine that "the holy men of God who," St. Peter tells us, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost[a]" under the old dispensation, thus indisputably both receiving and imparting the gifts of the Spirit, could be entirely ignorant of what we should now call the fundamental truths concerning Him. But on the other hand, we know that in the dawning of the new Dispensation also there were many who, though they professed and called themselves Christians, yet had "never so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost[b]." Probably it is quite compatible with both cases that some degrees of knowledge should have been possessed by the individuals in question respecting the Third Person. But at whatever conclusion we might arrive on these difficulties, we are at least justified in believing that the doctrine of the Spirit,

[a] 2 Pet. i. 21. [b] Acts xix. 2.

considered as a doctrine, is an absolutely distinctive feature of the Gospel covenant. When our Lord declared that it was expedient that he should go away, adding, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you[c]," He clearly intimated that the operation of the Holy Spirit was closely connected with the work of his own personal ministry, and in some way necessary in the mysterious ordering of the Divine counsels for the furtherance and due accomplishment of the great purpose of human redemption: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work[d]." These words we cannot but interpret as describing the course of the Divine operations down to the close of our Lord's personal ministry. Afterwards, it would seem, the stupendous process was to be carried on under the guidance and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, taking in some sort his place, and becoming thenceforward the most prominent agent in the destined works of illumination and sanctification, as well as in all the appointed means of Divine assistance.

[c] John xvi. 7. [d] John v. 17.

The *novelty* of such a declaration would sufficiently prove a characteristic difference in this respect to attach to the new dispensation: whereas in the *diversity* of these influences (a fruitful topic in some of the apostolical Epistles) we find a fact which, if taken in conjunction with that of the absence of similar declarations from the Old Testament, affords additional evidence that the doctrine in its completeness was intended to stand out as a peculiar feature in the teaching of the New.

And we should err greatly in thinking that this distinctiveness is to be restricted to the first ages of Christianity only. On the contrary, the illuminating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit, we are assured, will continue throughout all time: for that they do not resemble those external gifts which we on a former occasion deemed necessary for the establishment of a final revelation, but they resemble, nay, are altogether undistinguishable from, those other graces which are bestowed as *permanent* gifts upon the church and individual members of her community;—to serve for their light, and comfort, and edification, even unto the end of the world. And therefore it is in this doctrine that we must look, not only for the most

wonderful characteristic of the Gospel teaching, but also for the assurance of the everlasting duration of the religion taught; since the *ordinary* workings of the Holy Spirit must be, it is evident, entirely unimpaired by the lapse of centuries; and they thus afford to every successive generation the same advantages that were extended, in this respect at least, to the very first converts to the truth.

But we must nevertheless bear in mind, *in limine* and throughout, when discoursing on the doctrine of the Spirit, that the announcements in Sacred Writ which relate to the manifestations of the Holy Ghost are not such as to exclude the Father and the Son from "all part or fellowship" therein. "For," says bishop Sanderson, "it is an undoubted article of the orthodox faith, that all the actions and operations of the Divine Persons, those only excepted which are of intrinsical and mutual relation, are the joint and undivided works of the whole Three Persons, according to the common known maxim, constantly and uniformly received in the catholic Church, *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa.*" An observance of this maxim (important as it is in other respects also) will effectually guard us against the supposition that

the evidence any more than other gifts ascribed to the third Person, though it be rightly described as of distinct, can yet be of an altogether separate origin from that which proceeds from the other Two Persons in the Godhead.

I. And in connexion with this view of the reciprocation of the Divine operations in the case of the three Persons, I may first observe, that much of the subtlety of the scholastic period is rendered superfluous and nugatory by its admission. It is indeed a curious fact, that whilst the Schoolmen in general freely acknowledged that the essence and manifestations of the blessed Trinity were placed at an infinite distance, not only from us, but even "from the apprehension of angels;" they nevertheless not unfrequently attempted precise definitions of both; whereas those of them who were of a mystical turn of mind went so far as to assert that there is a triad of attributes precisely corresponding with the Trinity of Persons; according to which theory the fulness of *power* existed in the Father, that of *wisdom* in the Son, and that of *goodness* or *love* in the Holy Ghost. We might, of course, in the usual way impute this to the predilection of the period for dialectical subtleties; or, more accurately perhaps, to

the recollections which it cherished of the most attractive parts of the system of the Second Platonists, or Alexandrian School. But it must at the same time be allowed, that this ascription of perfections to the Three Persons severally was conceived by the theorists themselves to be borne out by certain passages of Scripture. It seems however an unnecessary task to expose the fallaciousness of such conceptions in the present day; since few, it may be presumed, would now so read and interpret Scripture as to discover therein any sanction for thus "arbitrarily distributing the Divine Attributes among the Three Persons."

II. Secondly, we may profitably recall to mind at this stage, that our theology does not consist, and far less our religion, in the solution of speculative questions on points of mystery, but rather in making ourselves acquainted with what is expressly and intelligibly revealed. The Christian Revelation, as has been before insisted, does not impart to us an absolute knowledge with regard to the generality, if indeed it does with regard to any, of the grand subjects whereof it treats: and although it would perhaps be wrong to say that the natural desire of knowledge on all matters, or the principle of curiosity,

deeply seated as we know it to be in the human mind, is condemned by Scripture, yet it certainly is to a great extent rebuked; the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world being expressly declared by the holy Apostle not to be "after Christ," but rather "philosophy and vain deceit[d]." The simple truth is, that Christian theology, like many other sciences (Ethics in particular) is a science of *relations*, and it is not the business of the disciple of Christ to pry too closely into the intrinsic natures of those beings, the relations between whom and himself, it may at the same time be evident, constitute the basis of his religion, so much as uninquiringly to recognise those relations as really subsisting, and to study the practical duties which flow from them. And if (which is more immediately to our present point) there are relations also subsisting between the Divine objects of our faith and worship themselves, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and works too of mutual operation—the *opera Trinitatis intrinseca* of which we before spoke —performed by the Persons respectively towards each other, these again need not be matter of painstaking investigation on our part; but we should rather rest contented

[d] Col. ii. 8.

with what we are told of their works to us-ward, and the numerous obligations thereby imposed upon ourselves.

III. Thirdly, it may be worth while to observe, that by similar, or rather the same reflexions, if they are carried out to their legitimate consequences, some sort of safeguard may be raised against the exorbitant indulgence of reverential and devotional feelings, however pure and praiseworthy in themselves, towards any one of the Three Persons, to the consequent and proportionate disparagement of the other two. Certain periods, not to say centuries, of Christianity have been distinguished by capricious and unequal directions of their faith and worship on the part of very sincere believers in the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity; and indeed in every age there are sure to be parties and individuals who manifest, more or less, an undue preference in their religious regards to one or other of the Three Persons. How far indeed the true history of most of the heresies and schisms which have rent and disfigured the Christian Church would exhibit but the outward development of this tendency, is a point that might be deserving of a profound consideration. But there can exist no doubt of its being capable of illus-

tration in a remarkable degree in the case of the Third Blessed Person, and more and more so, perhaps, as in the course of ecclesiastical history we approach nearer to our own times. At all events, no earlier period of the Church's history (unless indeed we consult the popish legends) can match the extravagancies of the latter half of the last century, when not single individuals, but whole assemblies of professing Christians notoriously made their boast of a Divine mission; of "special calls and directions from heaven; inspirations, communications, conversations face to face with God; even deified themselves, and put their own spirit in the seat of the Holy Ghost." Not but that, it must be allowed, a marked distinction is discernible, when we compare these latter aberrations relating to the Holy Spirit with those of the earlier ages of Christianity.—Formerly (as in the cases of Manes and Montanus,) the extravagant doctrines which were broached respecting the Third Person bore chiefly upon the question of his identity, and the time of his visible appearance upon earth, in fulfilment, as it was supposed, of our Lord's promise of his coming. And it is impossible to determine, from the conduct and teaching of the heretical leaders of those times, how

much of strictly personal ambition and other lower motives, *αἰτίαι ἀνθρωπικαί*, was mixed up with their other impulses of action. In more recent times, however, the promulgators and advocates of extreme opinions concerning the Holy Spirit and his influences have been for the most part free from the imputation of that sort of pride which doubtless actuated to a greater or less extent their early predecessors. The presumption of modern pretenders and enthusiasts (Swedenborg perhaps excepted) has consisted, not in laying claim to the intrinsic powers of the Spirit as possessed independently by themselves; far less in the open usurpation of the nature, essence, and even name of the Paraclete; but rather in arrogating unto themselves and their brethren and associates in what they have presumptuously contended to be the only true faith, certain signal and exuberant outpourings of the Divine afflatus. "As the Holy Spirit operated in an extraordinary manner on the Apostles and first Christians, so," to cite the language of one of my predecessors, "do they glory in his irresistible and sensible impulses. Accordingly it is a common thing for them to affirm that the Spirit is visibly poured out in their assemblies; that the Holy Ghost descends in a glorious man-

ner, that he comes like a mighty rushing wind, and moves on the whole congregation; or that the great God in a glorious manner fills and overshadows their souls." These and similar extravagant, not to say blasphemous, pretensions of the fanatical sects which are by no means abandoned in our own time, were collected from the works of the chief leaders of methodism, and animadverted upon with becoming severity from this place at the period to which I have already made allusion.

To proceed then. Although we know that the nature of the Spirit, and the modes of his relative operations of every kind, are altogether inscrutable to us, yet have we reason to think that it is otherwise with the fact or actuality of his manifestations. We are encouraged to believe that the "manifestation of the Spirit," which the Apostle declares to be "given to every man to profit withal[c]," may be such in many cases as to satisfy us of his presence, whether in the church of Christ or in the hearts and minds of individual believers. And this satisfaction will, of necessity, involve in either case a special evidence of the truth of our Holy religion. The same Apostle, we know, else-

[c] 1 Cor. xii. 7.

where emphatically connects the "sanctification of the Spirit" with "the belief of the truth[f]." The principal, if not the only difficulty, will lie in the discrimination of cases; i. e. in determining where such a conviction of the presence of the Spirit entertained by one mind can or cannot be fairly used as an argument for the satisfaction of others, not made (consciously at least) the immediate subjects of a like manifestation of the Spirit's influence. It is clear, however, that no such result as is thus contemplated can be produced, unless it be possible to establish some *criterion* of the Spirit's operation in each given case. But here, happily for us, the Divine bounty has made ample provision for every such necessity on the part of the sincere and observant Christian; Holy Scripture having declared to us, in language the most intelligible and expressive, what are the surest tests of the Spirit's influence under every imaginable form and variety of the conditions and circumstances of Christian life.

Nor was the case, we may remember, so different in that period which is described and characterized by the more signal, or (as they are called) the *extraordinary* manifesta-

[f] 2 Thess. ii. 13.

tions of the Spirit. We can hardly indeed suppose it to have been otherwise. The necessity of some criterion, or unquestionable tokens, of the actual presence of the Holy Ghost—some assurance that the supposed possessors of the Divine afflatus were actually inspired, or otherwise empowered by God himself to perform supernatural and superhuman actions—deeds worthy of being ranked among, as well as serving to shew forth, the "wonderful works of God[g]," must have been abundantly conspicuous, whether we regard the support which the first Christian teachers needed under the manifold difficulties of their position, or the satisfaction required by those around them of their having been really commissioned from on high. Of this a glance at the peculiarities of the time in question will serve to convince us.

How then, it may be asked, were the first preachers of the Gospel assured of their own inspiration, and the consequent (*if* consequent) truth of the religion which they taught? The answer to this question has been generally derived from a consideration of the peculiar circumstances in which the first Christians were placed; or, in other

[g] Acts ii. 11.

words, by adverting to the necessities of the new religion which they espoused. For there can be no doubt but that the distinction recognised as subsisting between the *ordinary* and the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, the χάριτες and the χαρίσματα, besides its other uses, gives a peculiar force to that familiar analogical description of the early ages of the church of Christ, under which it is represented as in a state of infancy. The χαρίσματα, or "miraculous boons" of the Holy Ghost, the *gratiæ gratis datæ* of the Schoolmen, such as the "gifts of tongues," "power of working miracles, signs, and wonders," "prophesyings," and the like, were obviously adapted to occasions of special exigency, resembling the helpless state of the actual infant. And accordingly a restricted meaning has been sometimes attached to the words already quoted from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which we construe "to profit withal," πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον, as though the manifestation of the Spirit, by which the context makes it clear that the Apostle means the χαρίσματα, not the χάριτες, bestowed upon the Christian convert were given, not that he might individually profit withal, or be in a better condition than otherwise in respect of his own personal salvation, but

that by their assistance he might edify and establish the Christian society or church. The *συμφέρον*, or weal, would, in short, under this interpretation, be the public weal of the Christian community: the Apostle in another place asserting, after he had been speaking of the gifts bestowed by God upon the different ministers of the church —"apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers[h]"—that it was "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ, *till* we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "From whence," says a controversial writer two centuries ago, following, as it would appear, the course of thought which ages before had suggested itself to St. Augustine, "it is evident that as the Gospel increased, and the church grew up, God, like a wise nurse, weaned her by degrees from these miraculous gifts, till at last, having arrived at her full stature in Christ, he left her, as parents leave their children when they are grown to be men, to subsist without extraordinary helps and supplies. And therefore, as the Scrip-

[h] Ephes. iv. 11, &c.

tures increased and were dispersed, God ceased by degrees to discover the doctrines of the Gospel by inspiration to the ministers of the church, and by that time the writings of the New Testament were made up, and the Scripture canon as it were sealed. The successors of the Apostles in the time of Clemens, Polycarp, and Papias (the disciples of St. John), and of Justin Martyr, pretended to no other way of Revelation, or coming to the knowledge of the Christian religion, than by the Word of God."

So that we may well conclude that when the divine structure, (to vary the figure,) had been once reared; as soon as, we might say, it had reached its ἀναγκαιότατον ὕψος, so as to be in a condition to be defended against the assaults of Jews and Pagans, then these χαρίσματα were withdrawn, as no longer indispensable, or indeed to be coveted by the Christian, since the χάριτες, the moral and ordinary graces of the same Spirit, were appointed to be ever present, and ceaselessly to pour their illuminating and sanctifying influences upon the hearts and souls of the faithful—abiding with the church, both ministers and people, unto the end of the world. In accordance with which permanency of the ordinary endowments, St. Paul exhorts

the Corinthians to covet these saving, rather than those miraculous graces of the Spirit;—assuring them that these should never fail, for "Charity," saith he, is a gift that "never faileth[g];" but other gifts shall; for "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; or whether there be tongues, they shall cease; or whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know (what we know by Revelation) but in part, and we prophesy (by inspiration) but in part; but when the 'perfect' knowledge of the Christian religion, or the perfect state of the church, is come, then that which is imperfect and obscure shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Consistently with these views it has been argued over and over again, that there exist no reasons why we should regard the early Christians, who were favored with the extraordinary "spiritual gifts," as having any advantage, with respect to the eventual purposes for which all God's gifts are granted, over Christians living in any other age. The gifts of miracles and prophecy, for example, could not of themselves and immediately

[g] 1 Cor. xiii. 8, etc.

conduce to the salvation of the persons upon whom they were bestowed; and we might easily shew that they afford no *proof* (which is our more immediate business) of the acceptedness of those persons; inasmuch as, for what we know, some extraordinary gift or other was bestowed upon every convert, and we are quite certain that many of them exhibited, notwithstanding this, in some respects a carnal mind, not only while possessed of these extraordinary spiritual gifts, but even, it has been stated, "in the very employment" of them.

However this may have been, it is difficult to believe that there were no cognizable signs or tokens by which the leaders and first teachers of Christians might assure themselves of their being really the subjects of the Holy Spirit's operations. On this point there exist, no doubt, great difficulties, arising principally from the generality of the language of Holy Scripture, wherever it speaks to this exact point. But it seems most reasonable so to interpret all the texts which bear upon the question as to infer, that the miraculous powers of which the Christians of the apostolic age made profession afforded ample conviction (however they might on some occasions be impelled by their still-existing human nature

"to grieve the Holy Spirit of God[h])"—afforded ample conviction, I say, to themselves of their Divine mission and authority; and that, accordingly, the same miraculous powers, called by the Apostle "gifts of the Holy Ghost[i]," performed the double function of both internal and external evidences to *them*, whereas they can possess the latter character only in their relation to the contemporary witnesses of their works, and to the after generations of the Christian world.

Allowing this to have been so, the more comprehensive inquiry next attracts our notice, by what means all Christians, living subsequently to the apostolic age, were and are enabled to perceive and ascertain the testimony of the Spirit, considered in the light of an internal evidence to the truth of the Gospel.

This question has doubtless been encumbered by very many unnecessary additions to the pure and simple doctrine of the Spirit's operations on the mind of man. And we may not err perhaps in regarding as one of the most gratuitous and questionable of these views, a disposition to ascribe the ordinary powers of the natural man to the special motions and energy of the Holy Spirit. It is, of

[h] Eph. iv. 30. [i] Heb. ii. 3, 4.

course, undeniable that many passages of Scripture, if interpreted with freedom, would seem to attribute all our better sort of works and faculties to the direct influence of Divine power. Not only are we told that "every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights[k]," but we are also assured that "without our Redeemer himself we can do nothing[l]," and that "it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure[m]." Yet these passages are surely to be limited to the end or purpose uppermost for the time being in the speaker's or writer's thoughts; of which purpose the context on each occasion will be the best interpreter. We must at any rate receive with caution all representations which would identify the natural *graces*, if I may so call them, that are yet exhibited in fallen humanity, with either the χαρίσματα or the χάριτες, (to employ once more a technical exactness of speech,) that proceed from the Holy Spirit of God. By the learned prelate, already mentioned in this Lecture, the natural excellencies, as they may be styled by comparison, of the individual Christian, are thus attributed to the operation of the Third Person of the blessed

[k] James i. 17. [l] John xv. 5. [m] Phil. ii. 14.

Trinity; and not only those superiorities by which some members of the human family are contradistinguished from others at the outset of life, (the φυσικαὶ ἀρεταί of the Stagyrite,) such as "promptness of wit," "clearness of understanding," "soundness of judgment," "readiness of speech," and the like advantages; but the same qualities when improved (made, as Aristotle again would say, ἠθικαὶ);—perfected, that is, "by education, art, industry, observation or experience, so that men become thereby skilful linguists, subtle disputers, copious orators, profound divines, powerful preachers, expert lawyers, physicians, historians, statesmen, commanders, artizans; excellent, in short, in any science, profession or faculty whatever;" nay, moreover, the "goods of the body and of fortune" too, as they have been enumerated in formal classifications with which most of us here are familiar, are all comprehended in their several grades of value and service, under the working, and in their combined aspect present one vast array of the manifestations, of one and the self-same Spirit.

Such views may surely be thought to overload the doctrine of spiritual influences, and to render it extremely difficult to interpret many parts of Scripture; and most especially

the declaration of the Apostle, that the "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God[k]." It seems hardly possible to adopt such expositions, and at the same time avoid running the two testimonies which are thus clearly recognised by the Apostle into one. But to return.

Allowing then all the differences already said to subsist between the earliest Christians and those of subsequent times, how has the Spirit, as respects the latter, distributed his gifts unto men? Dialectically speaking, the answer is short. The saving graces, the sanctifying influences, the Christian virtues, or by whatsoever titles we express the Spirit's operations, admit of being assembled under the one word Faith. Faith is the one all-absorbing and abiding gift of the Holy Ghost. It was this that our Lord himself declared should enable his immediate followers to remove mountains, and to display the other most wondrous indications of that species and measure of grace which they received. And it is the same inexhaustible fountain of Christian perfection which, supplying, as of necessary and natural consequence, those mental adornments and accomplishments which the Apostle expressly calls the "fruits of the

[k] Rom. viii. 16.

Spirit"—"goodness, righteousness, truth;"—"love, peace, longsuffering, kindness, meekness, temperance[1]," may be said to contain all the gifts that are ordinarily imparted to every individual in every age, "who," in the language of the text, "is born of the Spirit."

Nor, as respects the *assurance* which Christians may have of the Divine presence, is Holy Scripture less explicit than might be expected from the nature of the case. The doctrine of the Spirit's influence is connected with another vital and most awful doctrine, that of the communion of Christians with their Divine Head. For this we have the Apostle's testimony, "Hereby we know that He dwelleth in us, by his Spirit which He hath given us." The knowledge, that is to say, of the Spirit's presence is to be collected from the mental disposition and biases of which we may, upon a fair and careful self-examination, be made conscious in our own case, or by any means become cognizant in that of others. Upon this well-known truth little needs now be said. "As we judge," writes Archbishop Whately, "of the direction of any wind that blows (though invisible) by its effects—by the *direction* in which it impels the bodies moved by it—so we must decide whether we are in

[1] Ephes. v. 9; Gal. v. 22.

each instance influenced by God's Holy Spirit, or by our own corrupt desires and the spirit of the evil one, by observing the direction in which we are impelled; whether to holiness or to sin—towards a conformity or an opposition to the example of our great Master."

But how, it may be asked, are these considerations to be made available as *proofs* of the Christian religion? The answer which I shall offer is simply this. The deep convictions entertained by multitudes of sober and sincere persons of the operations of the Holy Spirit taking place in their hearts are legitimate and powerful evidences of that religion of which they hold them to be an essential and a vital part. This remarkable fact is of moment, even if we regard it in all the coldness of a mere historical notice: inasmuch as it bears along with it a perpetual accession of probability; that is, of the sort of proof on which we have all along been resting. The statement, if it stop here, is, of course, a narrow and guarded one; even, many will think, to the extreme of caution. And it is most certain that it might be expanded, without encroachment on the grounds of other arguments, to the extent of an immeasurable vastness. But in its Institutions also, and particularly in its Sacraments, that same religion,

we know, embodies and *proclaims* as it were the operation of spiritual influences, (of which indeed these are the outward signs,) as communicating to them their real value and purport; and without those influences the Church's highest rites and ordinances are, in fact, no signs at all. And so too, the advances of nations or of individuals in virtue and true holiness belong also, beyond question, to the same great argument; and these again will be always efficacious as instruments of satisfaction and conversion, in exact proportion to the degrees of clearness with which they may, as they undoubtedly must, be attributable to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and his irresistible power upon their hearts. For it is with communities as with private persons. All their "sufficiency[a]" for power, glory, wealth, or even existence, is "of God;" and in order to compass their ends, and to discharge their various duties, they require to be supported in their spiritual life. They need equally to be "strengthened[b]" with Christ's "Spirit in their inner man."

And this is perhaps all that we ought to advance respecting the doctrine of the Spirit, viewed simply in the light of a general argument, or as intended to have weight with the

[a] 2 Cor. iii. 5. [b] Eph. iii. 16.

great majority of hearers, in its bearing upon the truth of Christ's religion. For there are abundant reasons why our statements on this mysterious subject should not be amenable to the charge of being overstrained. And certainly one very strong necessity for caution and moderation on the subject of spiritual influences is, the great opening it offers for the inroads of religious error. For it is at this point more than all others that the extremes of a truly evangelical piety and the wildest and most reprehensible forms of spiritual presumption and self-originating delusion are very commonly seen to meet; and difficult indeed is it to observers of others, and doubtless in many cases to parties themselves, to ascertain the presence of the Spirit, and to distinguish his true and sober motions from mere fanciful and visionary impulses. But this we cannot wonder at when we consider the remoteness of the influences which the doctrine recognises from the appropriate field of mere human reason; and the alluring invitations which it frequently happens are held out to the pride and vanity of men, to the assumption of the Spirit's immediate patronage and guidance. There exist also various other temptations besides these, which can escape the notice of none who may direct

their attention to this subject; all of which render it needful that exertions should be made as early in life as we may each of us have opportunity to acquire clear and determinate notions, and to establish for ourselves corresponding principles of conduct, which may serve to regulate our progress through this most important and most dangerous department of our religious probation.

Nor is it, we may assure ourselves, impossible to secure effectual assistance in the work of thus determining our convictions, whilst we have Holy Scripture encouraging the attempt to do so in the plainest and most direct terms; on the one hand allowing that we may, nay, enjoining that we should, "try the spirits" in each case, "whether they are of God[r]," before we believe; and on the other demanding our cooperation with the Spirit of God in the work of grace and salvation; hereby implying, as it would seem, that the two powers at work in the same direction, though different, are not yet disparate and contradictory, but that the operation of the holy influence is somehow or other congenial with the just and genuine development of our own best faculties. The more prominent forms assumed by the errors

[r] John iv. 1.

at which I am glancing may come under our notice in the ensuing Lecture. Those which have been adverted to as yet are, to speak concisely, such as would question the finality of the Gospel Revelation; and those again which would remove, or at least disturb, the line of demarcation between the operations of the Spirit and the independent exercise of the powers belonging to the ψυχικός[s], or mere natural human being.

An earlier Lecture noticed the internal evidence suggested by our reason in an unassisted state: that which results from the same faculty when under the immediate influence of Divine aid, it was intended to consider summarily in the present. To attempt indeed a precision beyond the plain purport of positive statements in Scripture would be to miss the meaning and point of our Lord's own illustration in the text. The "natural" and the "spiritual" mind are yet clearly distinguishable from each other; and the latter is shewn to be or not to be under the superintending influence of the Spirit, by the whole course of our moral and religious action, from the first conception of any practical design to its complete consummation in a determinate act of holiness or sin. An en-

[s] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

deavour to state all the benefits we owe to the Holy Spirit in a practical point of view, must tend to reopen a wide field of considerations standing at a distance from our more immediate subject. Yet this much we may say, condensing the matter into the smallest space, that if "to do the will of God be to know of the doctrine," for the time being, "whether it be of God[t]," the hearty and persevering co-operation of our spirit with his Spirit is sure to be the most convincing and most enduring evidence of the faithfulness, the mercy, and the lovingkindness of God. It will realize also that *unspeakable* "joy in the Holy Ghost[u]," that "joy in believing," and "gayety of hope," of which we have the Scripture promises; and which has been well called "the richest cordial of the soul—the nearest resemblance and sweetest foretaste of the joys of heaven itself."

"Let us earnestly then," to conclude in the language of the learned Barrow, replete as it is with Scriptural allusions, "invite this holy Guest unto us, by our prayers unto him, who hath promised to bestow his Spirit upon those who *ask* it, to impart *this living stream* to every one which thirsteth after it. Let

[t] John vii. 17. [u] Rom. xiv. 17; xv. 13.

us willingly *receive* him into our hearts, let us treat him with all kind usage, with all humble observance. Let us not exclude him by supine neglect or rude *resistance;* let us not *grieve* him by our perverse and froward behaviour toward him; let us not *tempt* him by our fond presumptions or base treacheries; let us not *quench* his heavenly light and heat by our foul lusts and passions; but let us admit gladly his gentle illapses; let us hearken to his faithful suggestions; let us comply with his kindly motions; let us demean ourselves modestly, consistently, and officiously towards him." Which that we may each and all do, may God of his infinite love towards us grant, through the merits and mediation of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VII.

Song of Solomon i. 17.

The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

THE employment of reason, both in its natural and in its divinely enlightened state, having undergone such consideration as our occasion and limits would allow, it follows that we should turn our thoughts now to the other acknowledged powers of the mind, to each and all of which we did not hesitate to ascribe a rightful exercise upon the Evidences of Religion.

Multitudes, no doubt, are content to rest the proofs of Christianity upon the grounds which have already been submitted to our survey. Those of a philosophical turn of mind, or who are friendly to such general principles as carry at least a semblance of philosophical dignity with them, are unques-

tionably most prone to assent upon the shewing of the sorts of evidence which came before us in the earlier Lectures. Others again prefer that view of the discussion which makes it turn entirely upon the strength or weakness of the historical testimony adducible on either side, and tending to verify or to impeach the credibility of the multifarious narrations which are involved in the complete development of Christianity; and more especially, upon the evidence connected with the establishment of the Sacred Canon, and the early events and fortunes of the Christian Church. Whereas to others again, and these last perhaps the most numerous class in Protestant countries, the testimony of the Holy Spirit of God, (the subject, it will be remembered, of my last Lecture,) would appear to supersede all other kinds of possible and conceivable evidence, and thus render every investigation into the various other materials of proof which we have considered to be equally at the command of the religious inquirer, utterly superfluous in their case.

For ourselves, perhaps, it were enough to reflect that our Church has not thought it either necessary or expedient to forbid the employment of the subordinate (as they are generally esteemed) faculties of our minds

either upon the subject matter or the evidences of the sacred truth. But she goes farther than this: she encourages the proper cultivation of each and all of them, provided only their operation be confined within becoming limits. She does not, for example, whilst she would gladly check the exuberance of the imagination, (usually looked upon, nay notoriously, the wildest, and therefore the most dangerous of the mental powers,) prohibit its just and wholesome action. But she nevertheless inculcates that the impulses of the imagination should be always brought under the control of our more staid and sober faculties. Ever intent upon the instruction, moral and spiritual, of the whole man, she would, in fact, have all his powers operate in harmonious combination, and thereby contribute, as they severally may, to the common end for which they were designed. So far therefore from seeking to extinguish any of our inferior faculties, she acknowledges by her mode of teaching, and in her ritual also, that the sum of happiness, social and individual, may be greatly augmented by their cultivation, and an antidote at the same time supplied against the two perilous extremes of fanaticism and superstition; states which seem to follow, the one

upon an exorbitant indulgence, the other not unfrequently from an undue suppression of the imaginative powers.

I. The bare mention of the *imaginative* element in religion will, it may be presumed, naturally carry the thoughts of the classical student back to the mythical or fabulous theology of the ancient Pagan world. In examining this theology he will encounter many curious questions, upon which the opinions of learned men are divided down to the present hour. For instance, were the early poets of the pagans accounted to be, in the strict sense of the word, prophets also? Are their writings to be judged to contain the real sentiments of the nations of antiquity respecting religion, or are they to be interpreted allegorically? Were the poets in earnest in what they taught, or merely delegated by the several governments whose protection they enjoyed, to inculcate the notions believed by the rulers to be most favorable to social order, or to the retention of power in their own hands? What again is the full meaning of the phrases employed by Plato and other philosophers, when they speak of themselves and others as following the law, ἑπομένοι τῷ νόμῳ, in divine things, and upon this ground receiving the narra-

tions of poets and mythologists? Or again, what is the precise sense to be attached to the θεία μοῖρα, or divine dispensation, so frequently expatiated upon by the same writers? Further, do the philosophers and the poets constitute one and the same class of persons, or must we distinguish them as different authorities, in the inquiry? These and many other like questions must occur to us when we enter upon an accurate investigation of the nature and meaning of the Poetical Theology of ancient Paganism.

It would be foreign to our present purpose to attempt to solve these and other similar questions. What has been frequently remarked with respect to the uncertainty after all of the accounts remaining to us, and the indecision which they yet prove to have prevailed in the philosophical writings of those times, may be counted as sufficiently indicative both of the vagueness of the religious creeds of ancient Paganism, and the utter want of any evidence to support the main substance of their contents.

But, when we turn from Paganism to the history of the Jewish nation, amongst whom the knowledge of true religion was by the Divine ordering kept alive, we may hope to find some instruction and guidance as to the

admissibility of other influences besides those of reason and faith into the province of religious speculation. Nor do we conceive the hope in vain. The Jewish church (like our own) has set its seal to the alliance subsisting between the lower and higher parts of the human soul, by recognising as canonical the poetical books, as *we* call them, of the Old Testament. Of the first of these, the *Book of Job*, it is enough to say, that by the common confession of all readers, its title to the most exalted rank among writings of its own class, in points of poetical description and imagery, is fully established. Of the *Book of the Psalms* we need only be reminded (and this superfluously, living as we do under the immediate influence of our Church's appointed services) that, as it has been styled by Athanasius, Basil, Luther, an "Epitome," "Compendium," "Summary of all theology," in fact, the Bible as it were in miniature; so by Melancthon was it designated "the most elegant writing in the whole world." Of the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes too, though compendia these of ethics or moral philosophy, and therefore not likely antecedently to abound in poetical ornaments, yet that whilst the latter is described by an able critic as "written in a

rhetorical style, and interspersed with verses," which would fully justify its position among the poetical books, of many portions of the former Bishop Lowth himself has declared that "they are varied, elegant, sublime and truly poetical;" and of its earliest division, in particular, consisting of nine chapters, he speaks as abounding in "many beautiful descriptions and personifications; the diction polished, and full of the ornaments of poetry, so that it scarcely yields in elegance and splendour to any of the sacred writings." And so too, the remarkable Book from which the text is taken, and which closes the canon of poetical Scripture, may be best understood by considering it as a triumphant burst of exultation, accompanied with all the aids of poesy and song, over the imagined fulfilment of the solemn promise repeatedly made by the messengers of Jehovah to the Jewish nation, and which was afterwards emphatically summed up by the prophet Haggai, in the words which have so often come across our path, "the desire of all nations shall come[a]." Inspired as we must believe him to be with a sacred fervor, such as that which had before, on the occasion of Solomon's own marriage, impelled the sweet Psalmist of Israel to sing

[a] Haggai ii. 7.

concerning Christ and his Church, we find the Hebrew monarch, who was at once the wisest and the most accomplished of men, giving utterance to his joyful and eager aspirations after the coming of the Messiah, in this highly figurative, yet deeply significant effusion.

Into the peculiarities of this extraordinary composition it is not necessary for my purpose that I should enter. We may, without being mystics, assent at once to that criticism which recognises in this Song of songs, or superlative song, an expressive adaptation of sensible images to spiritual things, which must be understood to be thereby figured. We may consider, that under and throughout the whole imagery of this poem, call we it Pastoral Eclogue, Drama, or Idyl, the design is to represent God in his most endearing attributes—under the idea in which the beloved disciple chose in after time to exhibit the Divine Nature, when he wrote that "God is love[b];" or we may, without departing altogether from the under-current or undertone of thought discoverable throughout the poem, expatiate in the field of heathen cosmogony and physics, as indeed the commen-

[b] 1 John iv. 8.

tators of earlier times were wont to do, who (as Aristotle quotes the poets, when adverting to the expansive regions over which Love or Friendship may be described as ranging) discoursed, we are told, to the effect that "by Love the heavens are joined together, and the elements agree in composition, animals cohabit, cities are preserved, and all kingdoms supported and replenished. Which made Pherecydes Syrus say that "God was transformed into love before he made the world. And because God created all things in love, he also embraces all things with the same love; and would have us to love; which is indeed the sum of all he exacts from us; that being knit together by mutual love, we may in conclusion be united with him in love; so that all things may be one, as they were in the beginning." Of this love, say they, Solomon treats throughout this whole song, sometimes indeed translated Song of Loves, instead of Song of Songs; nay, it is the subject of all the book of God, which they prove again by examples from the sixty-second Psalm, and more particularly from that passage in the Prophet Hosea, "I will betroth me unto thee for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord[c]."

The scope of the feeling thus vividly presented in the book before us being so general and comprehensive, it is impossible that any who studies it attentively, and reflects upon its reception into the sacred canon, can mistake the signification or *moral*, so to speak, of its tendency. The principle of love, it might be contended, is nearly the whole of the human soul. It comprehends all that we understand by the heart, that most favourite representation in Holy Scripture of the whole man, intellectual as well as moral. And it lies at the bottom also of that impulse to the acquisition of knowledge, without which the understanding of man would be but an inoperative and nugatory possession. But such speculations are inapposite to my present subject. Let me then only further remark on the general tenor and purport of the Song of Solomon, that it is also capable of being viewed in conjunction with that grand feature of the Christian Revelation on which I have before touched; I mean, the *personality* which pervades its entire scheme, whether we look (to speak formally) to its objects of faith, to its sub-

[c] Hos. ii. 19, 20.

jects, or to the connecting links of intercommunication and relationship which are so emphatically declared to subsist between them. And with this last observation my text is in perfect accordance. For the common interpretation of the words "our house," makes it the same as the universal Church of Christ, and corresponding in the way of antitype to the Temple of the earlier Dispensation. This interpretation owes its reception chiefly, no doubt, to the mention of the "cedar" and the "fir;" the materials used, we know, in the construction of the Temple of Solomon. "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir." These sorts of wood were employed in the fabric as the most durable and incorruptible of the sorts then known. But I am not prepared to follow the common interpretations of the verse farther than this. The "beams" and the "rafters," as parts of the structure, are usually interpreted to signify the particular churches of Christ; which are parts, no doubt, of the whole Church or Temple of God; but not, surely, in the sense in which "beams" and "rafters" (and indeed the margin has "galleries" for "rafters") are parts of an architectural edifice. It may appear fanciful, I am well aware, and I offer it sim-

ply as a suggestion harmonizing with the subject of our present thoughts, to interpret rather these supports and props of the sacred building to be the evidences which were designed and overruled so as to be the everlasting sustainers of the Christian truth throughout all ages. To go beyond this general sense would be asking perhaps too much; although, with our common notions of the superior strength and solidity of the evidences supplied by reason, over the support afforded by the inferior parts of the human soul, the several clauses of the text might undoubtedly be conceived to coincide with the ordinary division of our mental powers.

The Jews are not commonly, perhaps, regarded as an imaginative people. But this is chiefly owing to the conceptions we form of the province and highest functions of the imagination. When characterizing a nation or an individual as imaginative, we are prone to require a transcendent, at least a remarkable development of the faculty in question to have been exhibited. Hence, probably, most persons, if asked to give a categorical answer to the question, "Were the Jews an imaginative people?" would answer in the negative. In the rapid mental search which

would be prompted by the question they would, it is likely, overlook the Hebrew nation altogether. They would think of Athens, Rome, Florence, and perhaps some other places, but not of Jerusalem. Yet the Jews indisputably participated in those qualities of mind which are found to be most luxuriant in the East; and there, we know, more than in any other part of the world, has the imagination indulged itself with greatest freedom from the very dawn of history down to the present time. It is needless to trace the connexion of the Greek theogonies and all the varieties of their theology (so to call it) and mythological lore with the more ancient conceptions of those eastern nations from which they notoriously borrowed them. The ornamental parts of Plato, if not his whole philosophy, much too perhaps of the graver system of his great disciple, might be traced to the same oriental source. The Greek mind, at any rate, always benefited from its intercourse with the older portions of the human race, and the advantage may be generally described as taking place through the medium of the imagination. Religion, in their case, as in that of the great majority (to say the least) of the chosen people, both declared its truths and *proved* them, mainly

through the action of the same power. And deriving our principles of criticism, as we even now do in great measure, from the Greeks, we could not justly draw a line of broad distinction between the Hebrews and the other sections of the old Eastern world. For to say nothing of the figurative style both of thought and language conspicuous, not here and there, but throughout the writings of the Old Testament; nor of the continual yieldings to temptation, on the part of the Israelites, in a matter of the most awful consequence to their national as well as individual welfare—for such assuredly is that transfer of their worship and homage from Jehovah to the local deities of neighbouring nations, which forms the most melancholy passage in all their chequered history—to pass, I say, these instances of the great hold had on their minds by what we cannot refuse to call the imaginative powers and sentiments of the soul, the single feature of their sacred *poetry* is enough to establish them in the highest rank of nations distinguished by the culture of the imagination. Or, briefly, if poetry be the highest art, and God and his truth the noblest subject, we cannot but, upon these simple hypotheses, award the prize of the most exalted of all ac-

complishments to the chosen people. It is indubitable that in one at least, and this the most sublime direction, did the imagination of the Jews outstrip in its development all other efforts of the same faculty to be found elsewhere: and this, we should remember, not at a single or a few periods of their history, (for there is perhaps an imaginative epoch in the history of every nation,) but throughout.

It is not unusual, I am aware, to distinguish the imagination in its simple condition from the same faculty when accompanied with passion or desire; and again, to recognise it either as spontaneous in its exercise, or as indebted to our own volitions for its operation, for even its presence, on many occasions. Whatever be the value of such distinctions, and whether the diversity which they express be real or not, is beside our present meditation. Such nice distinctions are, in fact, of no great importance in a religious point of view. The imagination should here be viewed, in common with our other powers, simply as a constituent element of our *responsibility*. In this point of view, the mere faculty and its spontaneous operations are obviously of but little moment. We do not, on the supposition of their spontaneity, create them by our will; we are therefore not ac-

countable (or but slightly so) for their ordinary presence and activity.

But where the creations of the mind are voluntary, whenever intention in any way accompanies the process of imagination, there we at once encounter a moral and religious element. And there too we discover the various functions of the faculty in question as they are exhibited by different men; whilst at the same time we see to what an extent these functions are equally exercised by us all. For it is not the writer of poetry or romance alone, who gives the rein to his imagination in those vivid scenes of varied incident and interest which he pourtrays in his narrative and imitations. We too do the same every hour. We, that is, ordinary men, are in fancy conceiving events that, it may be, will never happen; — "imagining," says a profound writer, "motives and passions, thinking our little romances .... and the fancy which they display is the same in kind with that which forms and fills the history of imaginary heroes and heroines. The dullest plodder over the obscurest desk, who sums up in the evening his daily tables of profit and loss, and who rises in the morning with the sole object of adding a few ciphers to that book of pounds and pence, which contains the whole annual

history of his life—even he, while he half lays down his quill to think of future prices and future demands, or future possibilities of loss, has his visions and imaginations like the sublimest poet; visions of a very different kind, indeed, from those to which poets are accustomed, but involving as truly the inspirations of fancy."

Whether then we take the humbler cases of imagination, or choose rather to fix our attention upon its sublimer exhibitions, two points will, of necessity, strike us; each of which is calculated to shew the connection of the faculty with our religious being. These are, the one its frequent, if not constant, association with our passions; the other, the relation which it also holds to our conceptions of futurity. These two incidents to, not to say *properties* of, the imagination will, I suppose, be allowed to impress it with a positive and not unimportant religious character and relation.

It should not however escape us, that in what some might consider to be its simplest mode of operation, we may view the imaginative faculty as connected with the past; and so it is that, in point of fact, we not unfrequently read of a historical imagination. But this development of the power every one

must exercise, in conjunction with his memory, whenever he calls up the visions of his own sensible experience, or (as unquestionably he may) the sensible experience of other men; and the exertion of such mental effort we have indeed already implied in our survey of the matter which history has contributed in furtherance of the general purposes of our inquiry.

And in this manner also we might doubtless approximate the imagination to the graver faculty of reason. But in truth, its main function seems to be to cater, as it were, for all the other powers of our minds, and in exact proportion to its degrees of strength and vividness, to yield them a becoming measure of allegiance, to share their empire, or to bear them along captive in its own wayward excursions of extravagance and caprice.

I. The form of religious enthusiasm most common in the Christian world has been already adverted to. Nor in these general views did I care to distinguish between it and fanaticism. Malignant passions, I would say however, do not perhaps supply us with the characteristic difference which separates these states from each other. The fanatic may just as correctly be defined the reli-

gionist in excess simply, as one who necessarily combines with his enthusiasm "the darkest and grossest ingredients of the human mind." None however will dispute that the conceptions (if superadded) of ferocity, ruthlessness, spiritual tyranny, and other such malignant impulses, conjure up before our mental vision the fanatical spirit in its worst and most appalling shape. A hint at the barbarous rites of religion practised by Pagan nations (whether recorded in the Old Testament, or in other histories), and at the Inquisition, may suffice, in passing, to complete the figure.

But there is a kind of generous enthusiasm also—a state of thought and feeling truly Christian, which is perhaps the noblest elevation of the human soul, and which only matches the genuine *chivalrous* principle of the olden time; the best and most brilliant forms of which indeed were indebted to it for their inspiration. It is this which is ever conducting its crusade against the current follies and superstitions of the age, and perpetually striving for their overthrow. In its most patriotic form it gives impulse to the zealous exertions of the missionary, and in the less expanded circles of Christian ministration encounters with a sacred ardour

those unnatural and distorted shapes which religion seems destined to be ever, more or less, assuming amid the masses. The soldier of Christ cannot be devoid of this species of enthusiasm, with all its attendant sentiments and impulses. We are accustomed indeed to hear the Bible itself eulogized for its boldness, and for the want of circumspection which it exhibits in its narrations and other multifarious disclosures. The enthusiast of whom I now speak will throw himself heroically into all its indiscretion, and freely take his share of all its seeming blemishes; knowing that behind all this imputed boldness and incaution, there stand the unerring wisdom and leadership of Omniscience; under the occasional semblance of incongruity are yet to be discovered the exactest harmony and order. He will catch the fervor of the Prophets and Apostles, nor shrink from "declaring," in the most fearless accents, "all the counsel of God[a]." At the same time he will by no means shun or depreciate the final appeal to reason; but will rather invite its aid to repel the aggressions which may be directed from any quarter against the Divine Economy and Word. He is convinced that the alleged instances of defective wisdom,

[a] Acts xx. 7.

prudence, justice, benevolence, are, when due regard is had to remote and comprehensive bearings, to causes and consequences revealed, implied, or possible, consistent in every way with the acknowledged perfections of the Divine mind; and that thus, even upon the investigation which is permitted to a created and finite intelligence, they serve rather to enhance than to impair the belief of the truly "wise and prudent" in the recorded operations of God.

But it is far otherwise with that enthusiasm of another sort, which the Christian advocate discerns to be diffusing its poison at the present time with no less assiduity and perseverance than have marked its operations in former ages. The essence of this enthusiasm is delusion, and it naturally issues in the maintenance of the most exorbitant and miscellaneous forms of unsound opinion. Nor is its province confined to speculative error only; for were this the case, its condemnation might be looked upon as to a great degree unnecessary. Its practical consequences are sure to militate against the right cultivation of the Gospel virtues, and are utterly destructive to the unity of the Christian profession. Nothing, in a word, has been so fruitful of schisms and divisions in the church of Christ; whereas the arrogance and

domineering spirit which distinguish its pretensions and outward bearing, are best seen in its contemptuous treatment of the purport and authority of Holy Scripture itself. It is in this particular that a dangerous example has been set to those who may, under anysoever personal or private influence, be tempted to set up their own favorite theories and fancies against all sober and humble interpretations of the sacred writings. And hence it would be no difficult task to trace (as has been done indeed more than once in the course of the periodical delivery of these Lectures) in what manner the action of the imagination in the enthusiast's case tends to supersede the value and use of all learning, and to obscure and invalidate, if not to nullify, the doctrines of Christianity themselves, and to make "of none effect" the most momentous and sacred of the Divine commandments.

And all this, we cannot but reflect, in direct contravention and disobedience to the precepts of sober piety, which abound throughout the Sacred Volume, and, we may add, to the spirit of its Divine Author. "Like it, the spirit of Christianity," says one of my predecessors, "is a gentle spirit, a spirit of meekness and of unassuming piety; it is not

puffed up with the hopes of attaining to an excellence which it never was designed to attain; it is not degraded by the performance of those services which it was directed to pay; but knowing that there is no possible means of honoring God but that of keeping his commandments, it reverences them all alike; it sees no distinction between greater or smaller duties; between such as are invidiously called human, and such as are enthusiastically termed angelic; but piously considers all to be equally sacred, as being all derived from the will and hallowed by the command of God."

The enthusiasm of which we are now speaking must, I say, display itself in direct counteraction of such a Christian spirit, even if we contemplate the enthusiast apart from his schismatic tendencies. But in the direct and necessary development of his delusions, it is impossible, as we before intimated, that he should confine their influence to himself. He must desire and toil to propagate his errors. To this work will he devote all his activity and zeal; and hence must ensue, in exact proportion to the success which may be permitted to attend his efforts, those manifold aberrations from the true faith, and infractions of the order and laws of sound dis-

cipline which the Church understands to be comprehended under the words "false doctrine, heresy and schism."

And thus we might proceed to connect our present meditation with these painful subjects also; but our course has been taken so as to meet the case of infidelity rather than those of heresy and schism. Doubtless they are too often fellow-citizens and neighbours; and *scepticism* may justly be regarded as the transition state—or, to pursue our figure, the mutual friend whose evil office it is to introduce them to each other. Hence it has been thought not improbable that "actual infidelity can hardly ever be long separated from habitual scepticism." How far the extreme tenets of the Romish church and the papacy (by virtue of the general law that extremes meet, and by the operation of other influences) also border, practically at least, upon the same dismal region of infidelity, I must leave to be settled by the testimony of those who have with the greatest judgment and faithfulness read the popular and sacerdotal mind of Roman catholic countries. The least that can be said is, that our own age is not behind preceding centuries in fearful disclosures and acknowledgments.

But let us not with self-complacency account our own communion to be entirely free from the evils which we may be tempted or even justified in imputing to others. We have our enthusiasts (in the worse sense also) within our own pale; and not only such as from natural fervency of feeling, or undue cultivation of the inferior powers of the soul, are hurried into the excesses of fanaticism, or even into overt acts of schism; but a sort of wary, cool enthusiasts (if indeed such epithets are here allowable) who upon the plea of conscience can argue calmly in justification of the most extravagant tenets suggested by their mere imagination or their passions, and who not unfrequently combine the lowest worldly wisdom with the wildest and most wilful hallucinations of the fanatical possession.

Let, however, the enthusiast, who may deceive others, and perhaps himself, with his theory of an otiose faith, or with his self-originating assurances of personal righteousness and consequent justification in the sight of God, be reminded that, if all other arguments prove unavailing, there remain yet two passages of Holy Scripture to confront and perplex him;—the direct challenge of the Apostle, "Shew me thy faith without thy

works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works[b];"—and the declaration of his great Master Himself; which annexes the reward of acceptance not to him "[c]who saith, Lord, Lord," but to him "that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven." Let him not mistake some warmth of feeling—transient, it may be, or periodical—for that devotion which alone is steady, habitual, practical; which can alone bring forth "[d]fruit unto holiness," and whose "end is everlasting life." If he call, or really believe his enthusiasm to be a holy zeal, he will do well to remember, that all zeal is not religious, or at least, Christian zeal; that there may be zeal in a bad cause, and the cause in such a case (supposing the means of ascertaining its true character are not unattainable) will cast back its own taint upon the feeling; and that again there may be a bad zeal in a good cause, where, on the contrary, the goodness of the cause will by no means sanctify the otherwise virtuous and praiseworthy emotion. Watchful, indeed, should we all be, and the more so in proportion to the earnestness with which, from whatever causes, religious questions are agitated around and amongst us, against the substitution or mistaking of feelings, however intense, for

[b] James ii. 18. [c] Matt. vii. 21. [d] Rom. vi. 22.

steadfast habits of religious action It is the nature, we well know, of habit, to strengthen itself more and more, as the progress of time may furnish opportunity. Our feelings, on the contrary, are fitful, capricious, transitory, and evanescent. These are not likely of themselves to carry us far on our way towards the attainment of real piety. It has accordingly been well said by one by whose teaching among us the University is at this time profiting, "that the fits and starts of him who is impelled by *mere feeling* are, upon the whole, rather retrograde than progressive. Their effect, at all events, is utterly unlike that advance in the way of holiness, which the constraining motives of sound practical religion render equable and steady. The very indulgence of feeling," he goes on to state, "is an easy thing, whereas true religion—the striving to 'enter in at the narrow gate' implies difficulty—a struggle naturally going on with our original propensities, a severe contest with our inclinations, a firm counteraction of the decided bias of our affections and desires."

II. The second point suggested was the relation of the imaginative functions to the subject of *futurity*. Were there a disposition to systematize on this point, a threefold view

would immediately invite our notice, and the imagination would divide itself according as its perceptions might be directed: first, to the temporal future; secondly, to the ultimate destinies of the human race; and thirdly, to the intermediate states of being, whether revealed as certain, or merely existing in the regions of ideal conjecture and possibility.

But a very few observations can be spared for each of these, in a meditation now necessarily drawing to its close.

1. Under the first of these divisions falls the much-agitated question of the millennium. Though discountenanced, as it would appear, by the earlier Church, Millenarianism has, we know, made its appearance with more or less prominence in every age of Christian reflection. By some the chivalrous energy of the *Crusades* has been connected closely with such expectations; and notions not only of the predicted thousand years being about to commence, but of their actually being close upon their termination, have had their enthusiastic supporters from the fourteenth century down to the present day. These expectations have, of course, varied much with, if indeed they have not taken their tone from, the different conceptions of Antichrist which have also prevailed at different

times and in different schools of thought and Scriptural interpretation. Our own generation does not witness a settlement of these disputed, and, it must be allowed by all, most difficult, not to say, unfathomable subjects. The evolution however of our present view constrains us to discern in the ardor and earnestness with which most pious minds are still prosecuting their inquiries in this assuredly not fundamental tenet of Christian truth, an additional *proof* of the accommodation of the Gospel Revelation to the varieties of the human mind; and a sort of *testimony* also, that that fortress must be itself secure, whose outworks and superfluous parts are thus staunchly and resolutely defended.

And here too doubtless we might say something of the relation of Christian art to the production of deeper and more vivid expressions of the devotional spirit amongst Christian worshippers. The poetical imagery with which the doctrine of the Millennium and the supposed approach of the last day were surrounded and adorned, forms a marked period in the history of the fine arts themselves. To say no more, "while the hymn 'Dies iræ' sounded the terrors of the general judgment into the ears of Christendom," we

are told that "painters employed their talents in keeping alive a remembrance of the end of all things by their representations of the dances of death, and of the general judgment; and Dante disclosed in his '*Divina comedia*' the worlds of hell, purgatory and paradise." Nor can I omit the remark of the same writer, falling in as it does with associations to which I have already pointed, that there was an "evident reaction between those works of the imagination on the one hand, and the subtle reasonings and definitions of the scholastics on the other, so that the one may be *explained* by the other."

And may we not think with justice that the Reformation, amidst the other blessings which it secured of Christian truth and liberty, exercised also a critical judgment upon the imagination, as well as upon the understanding of anterior times? The thought cannot now be pursued. But it is at least obvious that, as many of the Articles of our own Church condemn, both directly and indirectly, errors in thinking, reasoning, inference, and other operations of the understanding, so in her condemnation of Romish practices, under the title of "things vainly invented," in the twenty-second Article, she rebukes with a wholesome sternness and se-

verity the gratuitous and ill-assorted imaginations of a Christianity that had been undeniably corrupted, and grossly so, in this very particular.

2. But it is to the second member of our division that more peculiarly belong the notions entertained amongst Christians of the resurrection of the body, the general judgment, and the future condition of the saved and the condemned. On all these subjects we meet with the strangest views and speculations throughout the earlier centuries of the Christian period. The bold and fantastic speculations of Aquinas (who may in a general way be said to represent the scholastic spirit) on the resurrection-body are well known; and they supply a wondrous, yet fearful instance of the indulgence of the imaginative faculty, whenever it ventures in its soarings beyond that which is written. The second advent of our Lord to judge the world afforded another fruitful theme for the uncontrolled expatiations of the fanciful genius which marked the ages alluded to. But more commonly were the aspirations of daring minds employed in the most arbitrary delineations of the future world, as they carried on their researches both over "the bright regions of heaven, and the dark abodes of

hell." The mind which penetrates into the depths of these extraordinary speculations will find that there is hardly any, if a single, form of modern rationalistic or other scepticism on these momentous subjects, which has not its germ or corresponding image in the fancies at which we have thus been summarily glancing.

3. Nor, thirdly, were the *intermediate* states in which the soul was conceived to exist when separated from the body, without their potency in giving rise to the most versatile manifestations of imaginative power. Subtle questions and visionary theories were raised also as to the possible death of the soul, its sleep, and the modes and time of its ultimate reunion with the body. These and all the numerous versions which the doctrines of a purifying fire and purgatory from time to time assumed, would prove abundantly the captivating influences of those parts of Revelation which could be considered to afford the slightest countenance or groundwork for the indulgence of the devout mind in such contemplations Well may we be thankful that they were at length brought back to the tests of Scripture and common sense; and that the ritual of our Church was at the same time cleansed of all the legendary deceits,

and I fear we must add impurities, with which an ignorant or interested spiritual policy had for ages laboured, and certainly not unsuccessfully, to encrust it.

Who then amongst us will question, after pondering on the suggestions which have thus been briefly offered, that our imaginative powers are eminently constituent of our responsibility in the eyes of God? Who also can believe that so much, whether we consider the form or the matter of Revelation, is addressed to, and shaped so as to afford becoming and salutary exercise for, our fancy, and that there should not be also a proof concomitant—a peculiar evidence intended here as elsewhere to accompany such obvious adaptations to the irrepressible cravings of the human soul? If it be true that the evidences, as well as the doctrines, of our holy religion address themselves to the whole man, "body, mind, and soul," we may be sure that all the more active and influential parts of mind and soul cannot but have their proper and complete assurances vouchsafed to them. Our duty is to discover, as we best may, the spheres and capacities allotted to the several elements of our compound mental nature, and then to limit each and all to the scope of their own separate and appropriate jurisdic-

tions. But the connexion of this duty with the subject of Evidence only would suggest considerations far too numerous to be brought within the compass of a single Lecture, or even a series of Lectures. It may rather be pronounced to be the business of an entire life.

The views now taken might doubtless be extended to the many other recognitions of and appeals to the fancy which abound in the holy writings, and which are more or less familiar to us all. But our time will only allow of the bare mention of fable, parable, allegory, and the other tropes of resemblance and analogy, to be met with in such profusion in the Sacred Volume;—as also of the ministration of angels and demons, which likewise stand obviously related in the Christian system to the imagination or poetical element in the human soul. Enough however may have been said to shew, (which was indeed my object,) the connection subsisting between the exercise of the imaginative functions and the most momentous employments of our other mental powers upon religious questions; enough to confirm in our minds the conviction which Holy Scripture both recognises and sanctifies, that as there are "deep things" of the understanding, so are there also

high things of the imagination which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive—things which, far transcending all the flights of human genius and the sublimest inspirations of which in its unaided state it is susceptible, we must acknowledge, in a spirit of profoundest reverence and humility, "belong" not to us, but "to the Lord our God[a]."

[a] Deut. xxix. 29.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM CIII. 1.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

THIS reflective and self-apostrophizing exhortation of the Psalmist may be thought to form no inappropriate introduction to the last in the series of our present meditations. In the beginning of the Psalm, the pious David (for we are assured that it is his composition) endeavours to stimulate his heart and all his affections, every faculty and element of his inner nature, "all that is within him," to a grateful acknowledgment of the surpassing bounties of the Lord which had recently, it is thought, been bestowed upon him. "Bless the Lord," goes on the second verse, "O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." The verses

which immediately follow appear to allude more pointedly to circumstances attendant upon David's recovery from a dangerous sickness. He thence takes occasion to launch into a wider and more sublime contemplation of the Divine goodness. "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for *all* that are oppressed." His thoughts then taking a retrospective and historical turn, he notices the revelations and mercies of God to his chosen people in former days, in the verse, "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel;" and then, after dwelling upon his moral attributes, and contrasting in the liveliest and most expressive terms their grandeur with the feebleness and vanity of earthborn man, he concludes with declaring that "the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;—to such" (viz.) "as *keep* his covenant, and remember his commandments to *do* them."

The course of the Psalmist's thoughts thus brings him to the same point to which all true and serious convictions of the character and attributes of God must ever tend, to the inculcation of the practical duties of worship and praise; of the necessity of conforming in

spirit and in heart to all His declared commands, and evincing that conformity by an upright and godly conversation in this world. And to this end must likewise be referred all the uses of such investigations as that in which we have now been engaged—inquiries, I mean of course, into the *evidences* which have been vouchsafed to us of the sacred truth; "every conviction of the truth of the revealed religion being, in fact," says a well-known writer, when concluding his labours on the evidence from prophecy, "but introductory to its use. In that use the argument passes into piety and morals, and the duties of a personal religion."

A proper moral condition of mind then appears to be necessary, both at the commencement and at the end of our investigations into the Christian evidences; and we are reminded, as we draw towards the close of our inquiry, of observations on this particular which fell from us at the outset. And, no doubt, not only first and last, but throughout the whole process of investigation, must the individual disciple of Christ strive to cultivate that temper of mind which can alone give promise of the ultimate and effectual attainment of the truth. With reference to his whole life and character in the

eyes of God, it is his duty indeed to aspire after all the graces of the Christian character. This the Apostle may be supposed to mean, when he bids "this mind" be in us "which was also in Christ Jesus[a]." But we must look upon this and similar injunctions as intended to set forth our Blessed Lord as our great exemplar, mainly in the matter of our dispositions and tempers, and not so much in that of our intellectual nature; even as St. Paul bids us in other places "[b]put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering," and "above all these things, charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" qualities these, which all must perceive to be of a moral kind, and implying no intellectual superiority in him who exercises them. And yet the reaction of these states of mind and their opposites upon the understanding is most powerful; and this it is which imparts to them their chief importance in connection with our present subject; inasmuch as the right regulation of the *inferior* powers of our minds, as philosophy has chosen to account them, is quite as indispensable for the correct appreciation of the Evidences of Revelation, as it is for the proper reception of the saving truth itself.

[a] Phil. ii. 5. [b] Col. iii. 12, 13, 14.

Yet how commonly and how effectually have these ends been defeated by the erroneous conceptions which have prevailed as to the limits of the disciple's duty in this aspiration after Christian excellence! Many, not content to imitate the divine pattern in those parts and measures wherein they may reasonably and upon the assurance of God's own word hope for success, indulge the fond conceit of participating in those perfections of the Godhead which are absolutely incommunicable. They forget those other salutary checks and warnings which abound in Holy Scripture, forbidding them to pry into the Divine counsels—to look upon God's ways as resembling in all respects their own ways; and thus to break down the barriers which divide the original from the derived intelligence. What wonder then, if, having lost that awe for the unapproachable wisdom and majesty of God, and all the other reverential feelings which seem to belong to the natural and healthy condition of created beings, they should go on to frame for themselves erroneous conceptions of the Divine nature and of themselves, mistake their own powers and relations God-ward, and finally be involved in spiritual perplexities and darkness!

It was a desire "to be as gods[a]," which the serpent held out of old as the allurement to Eve to beguile her of her innocence. The too forward assertion of Divine power in themselves, "must we fetch you water out of this rock[b]?" in aftertime closed the gates of the Land of Promise against the chosen leaders of the holy people. And so it will ever be a spirit of similar presumption, some unauthorized and rash arrogation of Divine perfection—may we not say, in one word, *Pride?*—that shall operate as the main hindrance and stumblingblock in the way of the incautious seeker after Divine truth.

Something of this sort, I say, suggested itself at an early stage of our investigations. Without presuming to offer formal definitions, or to draw unerring lines of demarcation between them, we insisted on an essential difference as subsisting between the qualities of the Divine mind, and those principles which manifest themselves morally and intellectually in ourselves. And yet, notwithstanding such undoubted difference, it was necessary no less for the purposes of philosophical truth in general, than for our own immediate concernment with the evidences

[a] Gen. iii. 5. [b] Numb. xx. 10.

of Revealed Religion, that we should allow the existence of some congeniality or resemblance between them; it being apparently impossible that we should comprehend in any considerable degree the operations, or even the messages of God, unless we found them accommodated, to a certain extent at least, to our own faculties, and to their ordinary modes, whether of perception or natural development of any other kind.

We were met, however, *in limine* with the reflexion (into which I could not at the time enter), that the practical good of such distinctions, and indeed the necessity of instituting researches into the nature and varieties of evidence at all, are equally done away with by one most extraordinary dogma, even now declared (however incredible it may appear) to have its adherents amongst reasonable, and at the same time disinterested men. I am alluding to the doctrine of *Infallibility*, still theoretically maintained by a single section of the Christian world. Although I did not specify the doctrine in my first Lecture, yet the principles there laid down would (with those persons indeed who allow that Reason has any right whatever to deal with the question) have sufficed for its extinction. But it was my business on that occasion to

glance at *all* theories whatever which should encroach upon the perfections of the Supreme Being. Statements accordingly were advanced respecting the nature of God and man, which, whilst they vindicated the unapproachable dignity of the Godhead, afforded also a groundwork for that investigation of the Gospel Evidences which was to follow. For it was remembered that, as in the investigation of every proof, the thing to be proved should be all along kept clearly and steadily in view, in order to correct the possible irrelevancy of the evidence adduced; so it was equally necessary that the foundation-principles upon which the structures of proof are to be reared, should be accurately determined beforehand. With this conviction, I attempted to point out those general conceptions to which religion itself is for the most part reducible, and without the possession of which it seemed improbable that we should be competent to form a right judgment of the sorts of evidence also whereof the momentous truths of Revelation are capable. But here again no attempt was made to frame strict definitions, nor are they perhaps to be attained by us on such subjects. It was deemed sufficient to recall to your remembrance those principles and axiomatic

truths which (whether we call them primary or ultimate) must sooner or later be recognised and applied, whenever our minds are employed in an analysis of the Christian scheme. Many of these truths, no doubt, lie at the bottom of all religion equally; and this very consideration, it was surmised, gave them an even greater claim to our notice than if they were grounds or materials of our own system of belief exclusively.

The notion of infallibility existing any where save in the Person or Word of God himself would perhaps be characterised as an intellectual error. But there is a parallel error of a moral kind, which is equally destructive to the very elements and first principles of piety; and this is the notion of sinlessness, as appertaining to any condition whatever of humanity in its militant and unglorified state. The Church of England, we know, is sometimes reproached from a certain quarter for not having produced her saints. She may admit or deny the charge, just as we may please to define the term. If it is thought that they who, by comparison with their fellow Christians, shine forth truly "as lights in the world[c]," both following and

[c] Phil. ii. 15.

adorning the doctrine of Christ in all things, (and this seems the highest sense in which the epithet is used in Scripture,) are entitled to the designation, then may our Church safely by the act of simple denial repudiate the imputation cast upon her. But if the notion of sanctity be such as to invade the circle of Divine perfections, and to appropriate to itself not only grace sufficient to save ourselves, but also a measure, great or small, available for the wants and wishes of other men, in such a view of saintship she does not participate, and therefore neither lays claim to it for her sons, nor tolerates the assumption of it by or on behalf of the members of any other Christian community. Not only in the case of Romanism, but in all others, and certainly not least in her mode of dealing with the crude, or ignorant, or fanatical forms of belief and thought unhappily abounding amongst those who yet belong outwardly to her own communion, her paramount aim and object is to maintain with a holy jealousy the honor of God, by solemnly condemning every disposition to represent the *possible* condition of the Christian upon earth as one of unsinning and unblemished perfection;—a condition necessarily accompanied, as its advocates most consistently maintain, with the consciousness

as well as certainty of having achieved an absolute dominion over sin, and its insidious and powerful author.

Proceeding from the summary of our first principles to the *evidences* of Revealed Truth, we at once conceded to the sceptic, nay asserted for ourselves, that the reasonings of the Christian apologist fall short of demonstration. But at the same time we contended for the highest attainable degree of moral certainty. The evidence, in fact, adducible in favour of Christianity lies, as was then shewn, between the limits of "It must be true," on the one hand, and "It may be true for what we know," on the other. Were we freely to allow that the tide of Christian proof never rises to the former mark, we must assert with equal constancy that it never sinks below the latter. Hence, and with especial reference to "what we know," the frequency with which writers on the Evidences remind us of our *ignorance*, and warn us to listen to the sober dictates of prudence or worldly wisdom in the momentous question of our belief. We are admonished by them to choose the safe side, as we ought, and for the most part are prone to do, in other matters of practical concernment. And it might surely be expected that such admo-

nitions would have peculiar weight with the sceptical and rationalistic; since upon the principles of reason (which they are so fond of declaring to be their only guide) they, of all men, are most bound to yield to the overweight, however small, of evidence, on whichsoever side of a question it may preponderate. And the same persons, one would think, should be the most likely also to make allowance for that *possibility of error* which the very presence of doubt in their minds necessarily implies, and on this ground too should be the last to be so influenced by the absence of demonstration on one side of a difficult moral problem, as perversely and hastily to conclude, and give their assent, in favor of the other.

Nor should any of us, my brethren, think lightly of this argument, whether we may be disposed to call it prudent, or merely prudential. As matter of observation, there can be little doubt, I think, that it is the only speculative ground or reason upon which many find a resting place for their belief in Christianity. We employ it also very commonly in defending the details of our religious practice; as may be instanced, in passing, in the question of infant baptism. It may be doubtful, suppose (not that it is so), whether baptism recommends infants to God.

But it is, on the other hand, undisputed that the administration of the rite cannot injure their spiritual state, or, as it has been expressed by bishop Jeremy Taylor (when employing in fact the argument) "prejudice their eternity." The advantage then in point of safety lies with the Pædo-Baptist;—and it is thus, in reality, that in cases of practice too numerous to be cited, we adopt the course which prudence suggests, both in the conduct of our reasonings, and in their subsequent development in action.

We cannot then press too strongly upon the student of the evidences of Revealed Truth the inference which I would now, as before, deduce from the character both of its object and its subject,—the duty, I mean, of devoting serious and steady attention to the principles and conduct of Probable or Moral Proof. And the duty would appear most obvious, where, as in the case of our own academical system, the young are instructed in matters or departments of knowledge confessedly the most congenial to such a study. From them it might therefore be not unreasonably expected that they should evince a bias and an aptitude of no ordinary kind to probable reasonings, and a superior ability in determining both their absolute and their

relative value; and most especially so, in that region of inquiry and knowledge where their chief interests and hopes are situated, whether they have regard to their temporal or to their eternal happiness. I do not say that it is required or expected of them that they should be solicitous of investing their speculations with all the precision and formal completeness of a science. But they may, at least, impart a degree of order and regularity to their mental procedures in religion, if they simply note and arrange all those general rules which a periodical and frequent self-examination may shew to be most influential upon their judgment in practical affairs. It is quite true (and we often, in fact, see it advanced as an objection to systematizing our moral views) that all men do, and must, observe certain laws in the conduct and government of their practical reason. But we must not from thence conclude that it is unnecessary that they should be cognizant and observant of the principles upon which they proceed. It is sometimes indeed urged in the way of reply, that men will think, and reason, and judge *in a certain way*, whether they know it or not. But do they not act spontaneously and unmethodically to an equal extent in many other instances, where-

in, nevertheless, rules and maxims of guidance have been shewn by experience to be of the greatest advantage? Let us then rather believe that a sober investigation and careful estimate of the influences which ordinarily affect our minds in the determination of practical questions will be found of inestimable value, both in aiding our researches after truth on such subjects, and also in carrying on profitably the momentous business of self-examination itself, and indeed mental discipline of every kind.

It has been, we may well believe, under the influence of thoughts such as these, that master minds in our own Church have evolved by degrees what they deem, and designate by way of preeminence, the Philosophical Evidence of Christianity. I do not mean the metaphysical school of English Divines, but those rather who read a twofold Revelation of the Divine will and government in the written Word of God, on the one side, and in the face and book (so to call it) of universal nature on the other;—both these intimations, it is seen, running up into certain common principles, but yet exhibiting in their details the most marked and important differences. And here it is that the attention of the reasoner must always be for-

cibly directed both to the knowledge, and to the ignorance of man. The arguments drawn from the latter source, I mean the acknowledged ignorance of man, possess a value which, with reference to the subject of internal probabilities, was so well discerned by bishop Butler. But when studying this subject we cannot but observe a most important distinction. When we contemplate God in the abstract, we cannot ascribe to Him any specific ends or purposes at all. And this is the first degree or sample of our ignorance respecting him. But the case undergoes a very remarkable and important change when we go on to regard God in the character of a revealer. For revelation necessarily implies a positive link of connexion between God and us; and the belief of a revelation having been made, carries with it the supposition also of certain motives and purposes entertained by the Supreme Being, who is thus conceived to make known his Will to us. Hence, although we make the freest admission in the case of "the wisest and most knowing of mankind," that they yet cannot comprehend the ways and works of God, nevertheless not only these, but even ordinary persons, may and must estimate the claims of a professed revelation by the *worthiness* or

unworthiness of the ends to which it may appear to be conducive. And so, contrariwise, our capacity of doing this may be said to constitute the first degree of our knowledge in the matter. In what manner, and to what extent, we are enabled to pronounce a judgment upon the suitableness of particular points revealed to us to afford satisfactory proof of the credibility of the Christian scheme, both in general, and as respects its peculiar doctrines, was shewn in that part of these discourses which seemed most to require the introduction of such a notice. To have gone further would have rendered necessary a formal array of final causes; which conceived as falling into the shape of formal arguments, although they may be characterized as among the boldest, yet are they the reasonings most consistent with the principles of our nature, and capable indeed of being regarded as the foundation of most of the systems of natural religion which have met with reception in the world. Their boldness consists, as has been intimated, in ascribing or imputing motives to God. But this we can do, I repeat, when we contemplate Him in his *relative* character and dealings with the world; and in this attitude of relation he was seen (at a subsequent stage)

to have declared himself, in a greater or less degree, to all the nations of the world. And thus a way was opened, it was seen, for the application of the argument of *analogy*, which transfers us from the better known cases of intelligence and design to such as are farther removed from the limits of our experience and consciousness;—since the very conception of God, if it rise above the besotted dreamings of Epicurus, was thought to comprise, at the very least, the notions of reason, thought, intelligence, and other like qualities, of which we are conscious in the structure and composition of our own minds. And hence could not but ensue the belief of those arrangements, adaptations, and designs, in the recognition and application of which consists, for the most part, the doctrine of Final Causes in theology. It was not however sought to be denied, that the arguments supplied from this source must be very limited in their applicability. For even with the fullest light of the fullest of all revelations to assist them, who would pretend to know all the purposes of God in the creation and government of the universe? or who can set himself to fathom the reasons of God for concealing some of his purposes from our knowledge? "There is no manner of absurdity," says

bishop Butler, following along (as I cannot but think) the course of thought which had before been trodden by bishop Browne, "in supposing a veil on purpose drawn over some scenes of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, the sight of which might some way or other strike us too strongly; or that better ends are designed and served by their being concealed, than could be by their being exposed to our knowledge. The Almighty may cast clouds and darkness round about him, for reasons and purposes of which we have not the least glimpse or conception." And so, if we descend into particulars, by whom amongst the sons of men can the many possible, nay, take only the easily conceivable purposes of God in the single act of sending his only begotten Son into the world, be said to be thoroughly understood? We know indeed one great end of his coming, and this is enough for those whose duty and chief business it is to make such knowledge available for their own happiness, both temporal and eternal. But there is much reason for believing it possible that there are many other ends, in which we, that is, our whole species, may not be even remotely interested, to which this one single instance and act of the Divine economy is yet de-

stined to prove ministerial. What these ends are, and what also are the other special *means*, over and above those which are revealed to us, which may have been preordained for their accomplishment, we possess no present powers of ascertaining. It is far from improbable that they are beyond the reach of our most powerful and keenest faculties of intellection to understand, even after the most diligent and judicious cultivation of these powers; in a word, that they realize to the full all those emphatic declarations which we read in Holy Scripture as to the profundity and mysteriousness of the more general designs and arrangements of the Divine Providence.

A single limitation of the great argument alluded to would comprise the flood of evidence daily pouring in upon us from the legitimate conclusions of scientific research. The case of Nature, however, as restricted to the sphere of the material world, might perhaps be summarily dealt with. We are assured by a high living authority in the scientific world, that not one single ultimate law of nature has yet been discovered by man; and, since it is indisputable that the true object, the ἔργον, or peculiar business of *science*, in the now cur-

rent acceptation of the term, is to ascertain the ultimate laws of nature, the aggregate, be it ever so vast, of secondary or merely derivative laws and principles which are thus acknowledged to constitute the entire stock of physical attainments, might perhaps be thought undeserving of more than a passing notice from the theologian. *His* dealings with science might not seem to commence until she should have completed her peculiar task. But we may not perhaps so dismiss, with the appearance of an ungenerous disregard, a branch of knowledge confessedly most important in the manifold relations which it holds to human happiness, and one too, which, if what was said before be true, we should be thankful to think has almost universally strengthened the religious convictions of rightly ordered minds, if not indeed of all which have been most deeply conversant with its disclosures; thus, there can be no doubt, superadding another important item to the plentiful catalogue of the Christian Evidences. We should rejoice at least that with many and strong temptations drawing the votaries of science in the other direction, the cause of Christian truth has yet upon the whole been materially aided by the progress of every sound and really

searching scientific investigation. But apart from this consolatory reflection, it may still be questioned whether the increase of scientific light and knowledge—or the successful reference of less general to more general laws at which it aims, and which it no doubt has, to a great extent, accomplished—varies at all the logical force of the argument so often sought to be constructed from it. We may, I say, without invidiousness doubt this. At any rate, those who acknowledge that science is yet to seek for even one single ultimate material law, and yet put forward the results of science—or rather, (as they ought to say,) of the existing approximations to science—under the form of additional evidences for revealed truth, might be driven to renounce all claims to a proof, differing in kind, at least, from that which influences the most unscientific disciple of Christ. For the most simple and unsophisticated (I do not use the word in a bad or contemptuous sense) who from his knowledge, whether real or supposed, of a single law of the material universe,—say, the constant succession of day and night, the periodical appearance of sun, moon, stars, tides, seasons,—rejects, or, as we say, eliminates the agency of Chance from his cosmogony, straightway and without any con-

scious ratiocinative effort, believing in the providence of some wise and benevolent author and ruler of nature,—such an one, I say, would appear to reason as conclusively, nay to reason in a way identical, though not in degree, yet in kind at least, with the philosopher or man of science, who after all his pains, his experiments, his torturings of nature, his lengthened series of analyses and analogies, must perforce admit the existence of some still more general law behind,—must allow the probable, or at least possible intervention of some link or links, yet having their regular appointed station *in rerum natura*, between his discovered law and the still unknown material cause that lies beneath it —must be conscious of one more possibility still necessary in the order of proof, by which he would fain connect his earliest premisses with his last desired conclusion—that grand conclusion which carries him back to the first and only efficient Cause of all, and which, as it is equally valued, so is it equally arrived at, and (may we not say) equally *understood* by the philosopher and the peasant.

No doubt the instrument employed by all—the bridge, so to say, of which, though varying in width to each, yet each and all must avail themselves in their progress—is

analogy. But the scope and range of this most comprehensive mode of argument I was not careful to exhibit. The work I found already done for us by one who, himself deeply imbued with the spirit both of lord Bacon and bishop Butler, employed his thoughts in early life in investigating and explaining the various forces and bearings of the analogical argument, as well upon the general truth as upon the particular doctrines of the Christian scheme. Of some of these bearings we cannot but have been made conscious as our inquiry proceeded. The analogies, at least, of the older dispensations to the new, of Jewish and Pagan modes of thought and expectations to the maturer convictions and hopes of the disciple of Christ, and the general resemblance existing amidst their diversities, between the teaching of nature and of Scripture, have on different occasions passed before our minds. The *illustrative* force of analogy has met us also in our notices of types and other figures, both of action and of language, the introduction of which became necessary in the later portions of our inquiry; whereas its *practical* force, by which I mean its intimate union with our common principles of action, whether on the more momentous or on the

common and sudden occasions upon which we are all of us more or less called upon to act with little or no premeditation in matters of duty both to God and man, was left to be gathered from our remarks without any formal statement. Viewed indeed in this practical aspect, the importance of the analogical argument is most remarkable; and it is in this light especially that the convictions suggested by the system of universal nature, admit of being advantageously contrasted with all formal examinations into the question of the truth of Christianity. For "from these," [examinations] says the work to which I have just alluded, "the student rises, convinced that the religion is worthy of all acceptation; but his heart remains unmoved, and he straightway forgets what manner of religion that is, whose authenticity he has explored: but of the argument in question there is no man who cannot appreciate the value; since in its various modes of application it consults his wants—his feelings—his desires—his hopes—his fears."

The nature of the principles which (in the absence of demonstrative proof and its axioms, properly so called) remained at the disposal of the Christian reasoner having been described, I proceeded to notice the strong

points of the historical evidence, taken both in its widest and in some of its more contracted forms. And I did so without insisting with an undue vehemence, either upon the general characteristics of the Divine governance of the other nations of the earth as well as the chosen race, or "upon those experimental and well-attested facts" of special interposition which combined to give their peculiar support also to the Christian religion. History, in its largest no less than in its narrowest compass, was recognized as the appointed means of perpetuating the strongest of all evidence—the evidence of sense—throughout all ages. Its main office was considered to lie in enacting occurrences of preceding times over and over again before the eyes and in the ears of successive generations. That of which it is impossible that men could, strictly speaking, be personally eye and ear-witnesses, they nevertheless by inheritance and transmission from their predecessors see and hear (as it were) themselves. But it was not sought to dissociate the facts of history from those principles which had before been declared to form the major premisses of our reasonings, and thus the more general question of method (which disputants have so often driven to extremes), whether, viz., the

defence of Christianity be better begun with the internal or the external lines of proof, was superseded.

By far the larger portion of our subject having thus been traversed, and all the lines of evidence indicated by which the truths of Revelation can be shewn to possess a clear and indisputable title to the "verdict of the intellect," my next endeavour was to point out the additional and different proof resulting from the great doctrine of the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. These are, it was said, sometimes regarded as forming part of the Rational Evidences: they are so at any rate by those who think that the chief office of the Spirit is to illuminate and strengthen the reasoning powers in their application to Divine truth, and not so much to substitute another faculty of mental vision distinct from, and calculated to extinguish or supersede, reason in the mind of the believer. Without discussing this difficult, (and rather psychological than purely theological) question, I was content to offer some remarks tending to assure us of the immense accession to the tide of evidence which flows in from this at once the most pure and most copious of its sources.

For it could not be forgotten that all the

evidences which are adducible in a scientific and formal way, for the satisfaction of our unassisted and reasoning powers, may (as indeed they do) fail of carrying conviction to many, who with ever so great attention peruse or hear them. It must be satisfactory then to reflect, on the other hand, that this fact needs not lead us to call in question the sincere profession of belief in such cases. We may rejoice indeed to know that many, whose faith and piety are such as to human eyes defy all question or suspicion, yet are of opinion that the proper proof of Christianity does not lie within the province of what is strictly called *argument*. And here I do not mean those persons only, who, by their hostility to formalism, or by their conviction of the unquestionable coldness of mere dogmatic teaching in religion, are led to dissever faith and reason altogether, but a totally different class besides; persons who, whilst they acknowledge to the utmost the usefulness and necessity of religious inquiry, thought, and inference, yet hold that the proof of Christianity is incapable of being "moulded and methodized into an argumentative form" at all. There may be, and I think there is, much overstatement and consequent inaccuracy in the extreme views thus taken by

parties of very different modes of thinking in other respects on the same high and "hard to be understood" subjects. But the fact of such convictions being entertained honestly by sincere and inquiring minds at all, is too important to be excluded from our consideration;—if indeed it do not of itself constitute another line of argument in favour of a religion which can thus steadfastly be maintained without the acknowledged or even sensible help of explicit reasoning.

Lastly, the power of justifying "the hope that is in us," which is possessed also by the inferior faculties of the soul, was summarily submitted to our notice. What was said so recently could now be only alluded to with propriety—did not other considerations forbid my trespassing longer on a patient attention which I am fully conscious has been taxed too much already. With reference to this division of my subject, I would simply lament that that measure of consideration could not be bestowed upon the separate evidence afforded by the affections, which their importance in relation to the most momentous truths of religion justly demands. I must be content with the reflexion that the point was not altogether passed in silence. But were I to notice all the omissions and ble-

mishes of which I am even myself aware, I should be drawing largely indeed upon your time and indulgence. Let some apology for these be suggested by the vastness of the expanse over which the foregoing speculations have been, by the requirements of my general plan, necessitated (if I may so say) to be extended.

But if it should appear to any that the inquiry which has thus occupied us is unnecessary, or not sufficiently suited to the present time, such an one must have overlooked the painful and humiliating fact, that we are living in an age when the special doctrines of our faith are not only rejected by many, as resting on no adequate evidence, but actually on this very alleged ground treated with the most unmeasured ridicule and contempt. Nay, our belief in them is sometimes presumptuously characterized as a phenomenon degrading to the dignity and even to the very natures both of God and man. The all-merciful doctrine of the Atonement itself, for example, has been accused of "perverting the best minds, and producing in them a partial insanity." The Fathers of the Church have been represented as mere sophists, commenting, with insidious purpose and misdirected ingenuity, on the dreamy

self-born theories and far-fetched allegories of Paul of Tarsus;"—and in a strain of still more comprehensive condemnation, the system of saving Faith itself taught by the Church stigmatised as "an odious, disgusting and blasphemous system."

All this, alas! from one who wrote in our own day and country—himself an ordained minister of Christ, and once and for a considerable time looked upon as an ornament of our own Church and of this very University. The same writer, in earlier life a minister also of another country and communion, and possessed of the best means (as he was gifted with extraordinary quickness and nicety) of observation, has assured us too that "the strongest and most active portion of the public mind in all the civilized countries of Europe is opposed to religion;"—not, observe, to Christianity under any of its existing forms, but to religion itself altogether,—whereas of our own country he says, that "in England unbelief has made a rapid progress both in the higher and the lower orders." Such sentiments, we trust, are somewhat overcharged. Nevertheless, that they are to a more or less extent truthful, will hardly be disputed by those who shall bestow but ordinary attention upon the spiritual condition—the lives

as well as the professions of even the (so-called) religious sections of society, whether in this or any other Christian country.

But if Christianity and Religion generally be thus held in disrepute, what may we expect to be the feelings entertained in the same quarters towards the system of the Church, and that of our own Church in particular? Where the old allegations of priest-craft and corruption do not serve the turn, you will find that system condemned as "resting entirely on a basis of obsolete philosophy and criticism," which must, and ought, to vanish as the world advances, in the light of pure and rightly-cultivated reason. Both those who uphold and those who are trained in these systems are vilified as having lost, or being in a fair way to lose, all honest independence of mind, and voluntarily enveloping themselves and others in the dense atmosphere of a stolid superstition. These and similar charges against our own and all other Churches of Christ, are not obscurely hinted, but plainly asserted and maintained by many whose intellectual powers, erudition, and other mental accomplishments, render them in the estimation of the multitude no contemptible authorities in questions of this sort.

Nor, as might be expected, when Christian institutions are thus assailed, has it fared much better with the principles of natural religion. This is but in the usual course of things; since no objections can really be shewn to lie against the system of Revelation or its parts, which may not be shewn, upon a strict investigation and following out of principles to their results, to operate equally against the religion of nature also. The two religions indeed, after all the formal oppositions that have been raised between them, constitute, when rightly understood, but one and the same system. What wonder then if the religious convictions which Nature herself has given us have not escaped the assaults of scepticism and impiety? The worship of the Deity, or any other formal recognition of his supremacy, has been held to be derogatory to the natures both of God and man;—his laws have been nullified by the theory of their superfluousness, and their sanctions utterly renounced;—and at length, in what is fantastically styled the *eschatology* of modern philosophy, the idea of a future state has been asserted by the most audacious of all rationalists, to be "the last enemy which speculative criticism has to oppose, and, if possible, to overcome." It

is thus by attempting, or, as the phrase is, by *proving too much*, (where indeed any thing like proof is attempted,) the impugners of Revelation happily go far themselves to undermine and destroy their own arbitrary and reckless theories.

But is it necessary to encourage the evil forebodings which statements such as these are intended, and doubtless contribute largely, to engender? This it falls neither within my province nor my inclinations to allow. The Founder of this Lecture, we may confidently presume, was animated with the hope that, as time should proceed, the light of Christianity would be spread more and more widely over the world, and its diffusion be accompanied by corresponding augmentations of its evidences. The state of religion in his own day may possibly have warranted the indulgence of such an expectation. But at the same time, he was not inadvertent of the dangers which have never failed to beset the citadel of Christian truth; and he doubtless foresaw that the Church must ever continue to be watchful over the inestimable treasure committed to her safe keeping. Christianity, though it be in many points of view a standing revelation, is not, he well knew, thereby exempted from all the accidents of time and

worldly change. And so too the evidences, although in many respects they are standing also, yet are they likewise susceptible of divers modifications produced from time to time by the precariousness and mutability of human circumstances.

And there are probably not a few persons amongst those who are competent to give a judgment on such a point, who would allow that many important questions in religion itself, in its evidences, and in its criticisms, *have* in reality attained a determinate settlement during the period which has elapsed since the foundation of this Lecture. The truth of the Gospel indeed has been subjected to many trials, and encountered hostility from parties differing widely in every thing but their common aim and object; but so far from suffering materially from these aggressions, it has gathered fresh strength and brilliancy from every struggle. How this has been brought about would be extremely difficult to trace, were we to endeavour to account for the fact upon ordinary human principles. But it will be our wiser, as well as more reverential course, to refer it at once and without hesitation to the Divine providence and bounty. How far under God the annual delivery of argumenta-

tive discourses in support of our holy religion before the youth of this place, during and before the deplorable and God-denying epoch of the great French revolution, may have contributed to keep steadfast the faith of this country, it may be impossible for us now to estimate. We may be sure, however, that it had some influence; and we may believe, without presumption, that as we have an express arrangement of God in the existence of a permanent revelation, so there may be more than human wisdom and benevolence discernible in the institution of this and other similar periodical recognitions (if they be nothing more) of the *evidences* upon which the faith and hope and joy of the Christian are supported.

Nor is it indeed impossible that we should ourselves be apt to overrate, though unintentionally, the state of *unquiet* which we may observe in the Church at this or any other time. From a human point of view, there may, for example, be seen but little peace, when we turn our attention to the passing events which more immediately affect our own community. Yet, notwithstanding this, from the Divine seat of observation it may be realizing, as far as is practicable in any thing tarnished with human admixture,

the degree of repose as well as progress designed in the counsels of its all-wise Founder. The passions of men, fanaticism, bigotry, weak intellect, spiritual vanity as well as pride, these both within and without the Church's pale, will always be exerting their accumulated amounts of baneful influence. Yet may our Church, in spite of all this, be peaceful in its essence, as it is sound also in its appointed ritual and creed. We have ourselves witnessed the constancy and soundness of the national mind, as it was not long since unequivocally displayed in its relation to our political organization, and the stability of our social peace. May we not trust largely to the like demonstrations from the same quarter, with reference to our Religion and our Church also?

And so let us hope, let us be confident, that true religion—the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—like the nature of its Divine author, "the Rock of ages," "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—unchanged and unchangeable, whether by abridgment or addition, will transmit its blessings from generation to generation, "abiding continually," as it existed also originally in the Divine counsels before the world began, in truth, in faithfulness, and saving power. Its

own eternal verity pervading and sanctifying every one of its constituent parts, let us be sure that each separate truth of the Gospel scheme will shine out visibly and vividly through the succeeding mists of time, and all the distorting media of human passions and perversity; dissipating as it encounters every mere rational speculation, and often under even human management casting down the imaginations of men to the earth from whence they sprung. And so too let us trust that the evidences of the saving faith in Christ will go forward increasing, adding age by age, and year by year, strength unto their strength, until the stupendous scheme of Providence shall have been accomplished—"the everlasting Gospel" have been "preached to every nation;" and "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ[a]."

And for ourselves, my brethren, in this place, this "hallowed seat" (as it has been called) "of reason, and learning, and religion"—let us, I say, both the wisest and the less gifted among us with spiritual discernment or other knowledge, not abandon or neglect our great and glorious privileges. Let us strive to escape the imputation cast

[a] Rev. xiv. 6; xi. 15.

by the Apostle upon those whom he describes as "[a] ever learning, and yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Let us turn to worthy and truly Christian purposes those countless stores and appliances of knowledge and piety with which we are surrounded on every side. Let us endeavour so to settle and confirm our faith as always to be ready with "the reason of the hope" of salvation and eternal joy, that is, or ought to be, "in us." Above all, let us secure for ourselves that strong, if not the strongest evidence which we have the Divine Wisdom himself declaring to be attached to a life of sincere practical obedience;—not to the knowing only, but to the doing of the will of God. Then shall the light of revelation, like "the righteous[b]" whose paths it is its office to illumine, "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father;"—and all those differences which now to our obtuse mortal perceptions exist between the doctrines and the evidences of the eternal truth shall be dispelled;—vanishing gradually as we ourselves advance in the paths of holiness and inward peace, until that day when they shall be done away with for ever in the glo-

[a] 2 Tim. iii. 7. [b] Matt. xiii. 43.

rious mansions and the everlasting presence of God.

I conclude with the benediction of one of the earliest Christian writers:—"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ himself, the Eternal High Priest, the Son of God, build you up in Faith and Truth, and in all meekness, to live without anger, in patience, in long-suffering and forbearance, and give you a lot and part among the Saints, and to us with you, and to all them that are under Heaven who shall believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, and in his Father who raised him from the dead."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

SERMON I.

Page 1. l. 10. *no unworthy representation of Religion itself*] Condensed and general descriptions of Religion are to be found in abundance in the writings of divines and moralists; and most so when they are treating of Natural Religion. See, for example, bishop Wilkins's Principles of Natural Religion, b. I. c. 4; Wollaston's Religion of Nature delineated, sect. I. x. The description in the text is not offered either as a formal, or as a complete definition. It is simply an enlargement of that given by bishop Gastrell in his lectures on the certainty and necessity of Religion in general, *or* the first grounds and principles of human duty, where he says, "Religion, in short, is whatever we are *obliged* to by God." And again, "By Religion in general, I mean all that worship, service, or obedience, we that call ourselves men are to pay to God; or whatever we are in any respect *obliged* to, upon the prospect of his favour, or under the penalty of his displeasure in this or in a future state." vol. I. p. 282, 305, of Collection of Boyle Sermons, folio, 1739. See also his Definition of Irreligion, p. 320. Brief descriptions of Religion occurring in *Holy Scripture*, as in Micah vi. 8, Heb. xi. 6, James i. 27, are obviously to be construed in accordance with their special bearings upon the circumstances to which they relate. Like obser-

vations apply to the subject of Faith. "Faith," says bishop Sanderson, "is verbum πολύσημον, as most others are. There be that have reckoned up[a] more than twenty several significations of it in Scripture." See Sermon on Rom. xiv. 23, [the fourth ad Clerum.] And another writer remarks, "If I were tied to them [the common definitions of Faith] I could not have the freedom of my design, which is, to make a clear, full and ample description of Faith. This is not to cast a slight upon any of the received definitions; which, as they are placed in the common Catechisms, do serve well enough to point out some of the special and chief acts of faith, but are not sufficient to give a full or clear idea of it. Nor will I attempt to amend them, or to establish a better one; for it is not easy to make a good definition of such a comprehensive subject as Faith is; nor is such a thing so well understood by any definition as by taking a particular and separate view of those things which it comprehends. It is but a very confused notion of grammar, logic, or any other science which youth have by definitions which are first taught them; they then only rightly understand the nature and use of these sciences, when they have gone through them." [Cockburn's Inquiry into the Nature of Christian Faith, 1696.]

Page 2. l. 9. *idea, law, or fact*] The first and last of these words, it is well known, have been productive of much controversy. Indeed it might be a profitable as well as interesting employment to follow the uses of the word *idea* from the famous controversy of Locke with the bishop of Worcester down to the recent criticisms upon Mr. Newman's Essay on Development. For the uses of the word *fact*, see note on Fourth Sermon, infra.

Page 2. l. 24. *philosophical spirit of man*] Readers of Aristotle will readily catch my meaning. See Nicom. Eth. l. 3.—Dr. Jackson touches on the same point. "Now seeing every *assent*, especially of the intellective nature, so necessarily presupposeth knowledge, that the certainty of the one can hardly spring but from the clearness or per-

[a] Marloratus in Enchirid.

spicuity of the other, it will be a matter altogether impossible to give the reader a distinct and full view of the nature and essence of that assent whose differences and properties we out of Scripture seek, unless we first acquaint him with the true force and value of *knowledge*, *understanding*, or other terms of use equivalent, in the dialect of the sanctuary." Again, "Albeit all true knowledge even of these" [meaning matters logical, mathematical, or merely secular] "must be commensurable to the subject we profess to know, and rightly proportionate, or rather actually reaching to that *end* whereat it levels;" and again, "seeing all knowledge must be commensurable to the objects known." —*Works*, b. IV. c. 8. See also Sumner's Records of the Creation, c. iv. p. 306, 307, ed. 1825.

P. 3. l. 10. *methodically taught*] On the non-systematic teaching of the New Testament, see bishop Horsley's fifteenth letter to Dr. Priestley. "I cannot admit your position, that each of the Gospels was intended to be a sufficient instruction in the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christianity. Nothing seems to have been less the intention of any of the Evangelists, than to compose a system of fundamental principles. Instruction in fundamentals in that age was orally delivered," &c. &c. But consult bishop Van Mildert's note to his seventh Bampton Lect. p. 115, and his quotation from Stapferi Inst. Theol. Polem. See also Neander's History &c.; vol. II. p. 2. of Torry's translation. "As it is one essential characteristic of Christianity that it did not deliver a new law in a distinct set of formal precepts, nor found a new society, organized from without in certain fixed and invariable external forms; so it is another, that it did not communicate a rigid system of doctrines, settled and determined once for all in certain ready-made conceptions."

P. 5. l. 27. *But surely to define dogmatism*] The word is now generally used, I think, in a subjective sense; and some are disposed not even to consider emphatic assertion to be a necessary part of its meaning. Mr. Newman for instance, says, "Dogmatism is *a* religion's profession

of its own reality, as contrasted with other systems; but Polytheists are liberals, and hold that one religion is as good as another." Essay on Development, p. 447.

P. 6. l. 7. *the criterion of a Sophist*] The allusion is to the different descriptions of the Sophist to be found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who make sometimes one, sometimes another of these accidental failings the leading characteristic of that great moral phenomenon of their times presented in the person of the Sophist. Cf. Plat. Republ. §. 492, 3. Theæt. §. 167, &c.; Arist. Rhet. I. c. 1 and 2. The classical student will easily trace the uses of the word Σοφιστής.

Id. l. 21. *penalties of man's social condition*] The view alluded to occurs in Dr. Hampden's Bampton Lectures, p. 383, first edit.

P. 7. l. 20. *The choice would still remain*] "But though I admit the possibility of an inspired teacher's error of opinion in subjects which he is not sent to teach (because inspiration is not omniscience, and some things there must be which it will leave untaught)—though I stand on this point for my own and every man's liberty; and protest against any obligation on the believer's conscience, to assent to a philosophical opinion incidentally expressed by Moses, by David, or by St. Paul, upon the authority of their infallibility in Divine knowledge—though I think it highly for the honour and the interest of religion that this liberty of philosophizing (except upon religious subjects) should be openly asserted and most pertinaciously maintained—yet I confess it appears to me no very probable supposition that an inspired writer should be permitted in his religious discourses to affirm a false proposition in *any* subject, or in *any* history to misrepresent a fact; so that I would not easily, nor indeed without the conviction of the most cogent proof, embrace any notion in philosophy, or attend to any historical relation, which should be evidently and in itself repugnant to an explicit assertion of any of the sacred writers."—Bishop Horsley's Thirty-ninth Sermon.

P. 8. l. 16. "*All that we ask,*" *writes an able advocate of Induction*] Dr. Chalmers, in his Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation, p. 216. 290. He seems to be here recommending in particular the application of an Inductive Philology to the study of the Sacred Writings. But in his other works, and occasionally in this (see his treatment of the Objections from Geology in c. 7), he delivers the sentiments which I have attributed to him in the text.

P. 10. l. 18. *that unteachableness*] "Wicked men," writes bishop Wilkins, "are in the Scripture phrase stiled [a] *υἱοὶ ἀπειθείας, filii insuasibilitatis*, unpersuadable men, such as no reason can convince. And elsewhere they are stiled *ἄτοποι*[b], which we translate unreasonable men. But the word may signify absurd, contumacious persons, who are not fixed by any principles, whom no *topicks* can work upon, being directly opposite to this virtue of faith, as appears by the next clause, *For all men have not faith.*" Principles of Nat. Rel. p. 29.

P. 12. l. 8. *a literal interpretation of the words* "*Ye are gods*"] This is not the place to dilate on the uses of the substantive verb, and logical copula. Yet it may be observed that some languages construct their propositions—as is the case indeed here in the original Hebrew—without employing it at all. But variety of idiom does not affect the observation in the text. My meaning may be found in the following passage from Waterland:—"Against those Gaianites, one Anastasius (a monk of Mount Sinai, about the year 680) happened to engage: and amongst other topics of argumentation, he made choice of one drawn from the eucharist. He had learned, or might have learned from catholic teachers, that by the operation of the Holy Spirit the elements are *changed* into the *body* of Christ, meaning the *symbolical body;* that is, changed into *sacraments*, or *holy* signs: and he had learned also, that the worthy communicants do partake of the *natural* body of Christ, the *thing*

[a] Ephes. ii. 2, 6 and Col. iii. 6. [b] 2 Thess. iii. 2.

signified; that is, *spiritually*, *mystically*, *symbolically* partake of it. These two propositions he *confusedly* remembered, or rather ignorantly *misunderstood*, and so he blended them both into this one; that the elements themselves upon consecration become, not in signification, but in reality, the *natural* body of Christ: which amounted to saying, that instead of exhibitive signs, they become the very *things signified*. Under such confusion of thought, he formed his argument against the Gaianites in this manner: 'The consecrated elements are no *types* or *figures*, but they are the *very body* and *blood* of our Lord; and they are *corruptible*, as will appear upon experiment: therefore our Lord's body, before his resurrection, was also *corruptible*,' which was to be proved. To confirm his notion that the elements are no *types* or *figures*, but the very *body*, he pleaded, that our Lord in the institution said not, this is the *figure* (*antitype*) of my body, but 'this is my body.' An argument by which he might as easily have proved that the rock in the wilderness was the *very Christ:* for St. Paul said not that the rock *signified* Christ, or was a *symbol* of Christ; but he declared in express words, that 'that rock was Christ.' It is hard to say what precise ideas that author had of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, or what he really meant; if indeed he went farther than the sound of words." Works, vol. VIII. p. 235, edit. 1823. Similarly Bishop Jewel:—"Thus the holy fathers used oftentimes to advance and to magnify the holy mysteries, the better to bring their hearers to the deep and inward consideration of the same; and therefore St. Augustine saith, *sacramenta...tantæ rei non nisi ejusdem rei vocabulo nuncuparunt:* 'they expressed the sacraments of so great a thing none otherwise than by the name of the same thing.' So St. Paul saith: 'The rock was Christ.' So another saith: 'The oil is Christ;' and another, *manna erat Christus, qui descendit de cœlo:* 'The manna (that rained in the wilderness) was Christ, that came down from heaven.' Thus are we taught that 'manna was Christ,' that 'the oil was Christ,' and that 'the rock was Christ.'

And these sayings are true. And yet indeed and verily, in nature and substance, neither the manna, nor the oil, nor the rock was Christ." Third portion of Works, p. 499, and references in the edition of the Parker Society. See some trifling on the force of the verb in such propositions, in the Port Royal Logic (l'Art de penser) part II. c. XIV. The chapter is omitted in most editions.

P. 13. l. 2. *called by theologians incommunicable*] See bishop Wilkins' Princ. of Nat. Rel. I. c. 8; where the excellencies and perfections of the Divine nature are enumerated under the two heads of Incommunicable and Communicable.

P. 17. l. 1. *keeping constant even pace with*] On the connexion of the Christian Evidences with the attributes of the Deity, Mr. Davison makes some excellent observations in the paragraph ending with the words quoted. See his work on Prophecy, p. 37, 38.

P. 18. l. 5. *theology ... the science of God*] See Dr. Burton's 34th note to his Bamp. Lect. on the *knowledge* of God, as considered to be attainable or not by the ancient philosophers. On the attempts of scholasticism to construct a perfect system of Divine knowledge upon abstract principles concerning the nature of God, see Dr. Hampden's Bampton Lecture, Sermon second and third. Of *Reason* in God, and other superhuman beings, Wollaston says: "The Supreme Being has, no doubt, a direct and perfect intuition of things with their natures and relations, lying as it were all before Him, and pervious to His eye; or at least we may safely say, that he is not obliged to make use of our operose methods by *ideas* and inferences; but knows things in a manner infinitely above all our conceptions. And as to superior finite natures, what other means of attaining to the knowledge of things they may have, is a thing not to be told by me; or how far they may excel us in this way of finding truth....Reason must be understood, when it is ascribed to God, to be the *Divine* reason; when to other beings above us, to be *their* reason; and in all of them to transcend *ours*, as much as their natures

respectively do our nature." Religion of Nature Delineated, p. 78.

Id. l. 16. *Go on as far as we may*] That this should not discourage us in our endeavours to understand the Divine Nature, as far as our powers and opportunities allow, is thus urged by archbishop Bramhall:—"It is true we who 'see but through a glass darkly,' do not in this mortality comprehend exactly the nature of God and the holy angels; partly by reason of the weakness of our understanding,—the water can ascend no higher than the fountain's head—and partly for want of revelation. Not to know what God hath not revealed, is a learned ignorance; and therefore, he who searcheth presumptuously into the majesty of God, is oppressed deservedly by his glory. But the much greater offence doth lie on the other side—that men do not endeavour to know God so much as they ought, and might, by the light of nature, the contemplation of the creatures, and the revelation of God's holy word, or to serve Him according to their knowledge. How shall we serve God, *if we do not know God at all?* The least means of the knowledge of God is by the contemplation of the creatures: yet even that doth render men 'without excuse.'" Works, vol. IV. p. 380.

P. 19. l. 9. *system of anthropology*] On this subject consult Hagenbach's History of Doctrines, 3rd section of First Period, from §. 53 to 58. In a note to §. 53, he quotes Clem. Pæd. III. 1. p. 250: Ἦν ἄρα ὡς ἔοικε μεγίστων μαθημάτων τὸ γνῶναι αὑτόν· ἑαυτὸν γάρ τις ἐὰν γνῴη, θεὸν εἴσεται. This is adduced in support of the statement that "the material design of Christianity is to turn the attention of man to himself, and to bring him to the knowledge of his own nature." The precise sense, however, of the passage it is not easy to discover. For the other points glanced at in this paragraph, consult Dr. Jackson's Justifying Faith, b. IV. c. 5, 6, 7.

P. 22. l. 10. *The faculty of conscience must be conceded*] Dr. Ogilvie notices the question whether Conscience should be regarded as "a faculty *of* the mind, or *the* mind, in ex-

ercise and operation according to a particular method." But he adds, that all are agreed "*that conscience is a power imparted to every human being by God.*" See p. 53, of Sermons, 1847, and the references to South, Sanderson, and Butler in the note; also his quotation from S. Chrysost. in Ps. VII. at p. 60. The parallel question, Whether the will of God be God? is noticed in Waterland's Second Defence of some Queries, Qu. VIII.

P. 25. l. 23. "*Every creature of God is good*"] Consult bishop Sanderson's sermon on this text.

P. 27. l. 16. *a being of such hopeless and utter depravity*] See the strong language of the Homily of the Nativity. The sense of the Reformers of our Church, however, is contended to have been more favourable to human nature, by Archbishop Lawrence, in his Bampton Lectures, p. 74. Mr. Miller also has dwelt upon the inexpediency of conveying the impression *in popular addresses*, that the power of this primitive disease is unmixed and unlimited. Bampton Lectures, p. 102—106, third edition.

P. 28. l. 15. *ultra-Calvinistic*] I use the term advisedly. Bishop Horsley says, "I consider it as the reproach of the dissenters of the present day that a genuine Calvinist is hardly to be found."—Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's second Letters, part II. c. 4. The same fact is freely acknowledged and deplored by R. Haldane, in his Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation.

P. 29. l. 9. *Plato's ideas*] See the 22nd and 23rd Notes to Dr. Burton's Bampton Lectures.

P. 30. l. 6. *many sincere advocates*] Bishop Horsley, for instance, says: "Now although this natural fitness and propriety be not the origin of moral obligation among men, yet it is indeed a higher principle; for it is that from which that will of God himself originates by which the natural discernment of our conscience acquires the force of a law for the regulation of our lives." And again: "The perfection of these moral attributes is the foundation of the necessity of God's own existence." (Serm. 21). But he elsewhere says, (Serm. 29,) "The Scriptures assert that God governs the

world according to his will; by which we must understand a will perfectly independent, and *unbiassed by any thing external;* yet not an arbitrary will, but a will directed by the governing perfections of the Divine intellect." Cf. bishop Butler's Analogy, II. 8. It may be observed that the difference between the first and second Platonists is often stated to have been that the former made the *ideas* stand apart from, the latter made them comprehended in, the mind of God.

P. 32. l. 16. *It was thus that bishop Van Mildert*] See his Fifteenth Boyle Lecture, the notes on which contain a mass of information on this subject, collected from bishop Taylor, Felton, Ellis and others.

P. 33. l. 4. *Those capacities which fit him*] "And how needless to me seem those disputes about human liberty, with which men have tired themselves and the world. The case is much the same, as if a man should have some great reward or advantage offered to him, if he would get up and go to such a place to accept it, or do some certain thing for it, and he, instead of going or doing any thing, falls into a tedious disquisition about his own *freedom;* whether he has the power to stir, or whether he is not chained to his seat, and necessitated to sit still. The short way of knowing this certainly is to try. If he can do nothing, no labour can be lost, but if he is capable of acting, and doth not act, the consequences and blame must be justly chargeable upon himself. And I am persuaded, if men would be serious, and put forth themselves, they would find by experience that their wills are not so universally and peremptorily determined by what occurs, nor predestination and fate so rigid, but that much is left to their own conduct. Up and try."—Wollaston's Religion of Nature Delineated, Sect. III. in fine. See also Waterland's Discourse on Fundamentals; Dr. Tatham's Bampton Lect. ch. on the Ethical Principle; and a masterly chapter in Davison on Prophecy.

P. 34. l. 1. *right employment of which*] "But to be rational is so glorious a thing, that two-legged creatures

generally content themselves with the title; but will not debase so excellent a faculty about the conduct of so trivial a thing as they make themselves." Locke's letter to Mr. Collins, Jan. 24, 1703-4.

P. 36. l. 16. *predisposing causes of unbelief*] "The sum of what I would earnestly recommend to all those, who desire to find the truth in matters of religion, is sincerity of heart. Let them seriously and honestly examine their own hearts in the first place, before they offer to judge of the evidence; whether there be not in them any latent prejudice against Religion, any secret wish or desire that it may not be true, because of its crossing some private passion or vicious inclination, which they would willingly pursue without control; whether there be nothing of inward pride or self-conceit which makes them affect an opinion, because it is singular or new, or reject one, because it is old or vulgar; and whether they have not taken unseasonable offence at all religion, because of the abuses that have been made of it, and to avoid one extreme, have without consideration run into another; because any of these, or the like prejudices, will certainly indispose them towards the sincere search of truth; and will make both the arguments and the objections appear very different from what they are. *Purity of heart* is the surest way to see God, even in this sense of seeing him."—Bishop Leng's Second Boyle Lecture. "Amidst all our care, and perplexity, whether for ourselves, or those dear to us, or entrusted to our care, we are graciously permitted to repose with undoubting faith on this one merciful assurance, that sincere goodness will in the end find its home in the place from whence it came. The pure in heart shall finally see God." Keble's preface to Sermons, 1848. See also Dr. Tatham's Remarks on Faith, towards the conclusion of his Bampton Lectures.

SERMON II.

P. 45. l. 7. "*For who,*" *says a popular writer on the evidences,* "*can deny,*" *&c.*] This is not accurately quoted. But the sentiment occurs more than once in Mr. Erskine's remarks on the Internal Evidence for the truth of Revealed Religion, and almost in these words, in section VII. Some judicious observations are to be found also in section IV, with reference to the different effects produced by the same argument upon the minds of different individuals.

P. 47. l. 28. *such a degree of assurance*] "Certainty is but an immunity from change or mutability." Jackson's Works, p. 607. "The Romanist exacts a certainty of assent in the believer, more exact than demonstrative sciences afford, and yet makes Divine revelations not only not evident, but inevident and obscure, the method of faith even a labyrinth of obscurities." p. 609. "God be thanked that we have sufficient means to be certain enough of the truth of our faith... You (Romanists) content not yourselves with a moral certainty of the things you believe, nor with such a degree of assurance as is sufficient to produce obedience, which is all that we require. God's Spirit, if he please, may work more, a certainty of adherence beyond a certainty of evidence, &c." Chillingworth, part I. c. 2. §. 154. Jackson again writes: "The certainty of this general resolution—that all Divine truths proposed in Scriptures are most undoubtedly to be embraced—is as great as can be found in the undoubted maxims or common principles of exact sciences." Works, p. 613, where see his reference to Hooker's use of the phrase "certainty of adherence," in a sermon upon the prophet Habakkuk's doubtful cogitation.

P. 49. l. 10. *made to the intellect exclusively*] "It may be questioned even whether the principle itself of the requisite predominance of the intellect in order to the due reception of evidence be as fully apprehended in theory as its apparent simplicity might be thought to imply, and as

its importance requires. Every one will indeed acknowledge, that when employed on religious proof, the understanding should be free from partiality and prejudice; but that *to take any share* in the duty of ascertaining the truth of religion, the intellect *alone* is competent; that even points which when contemplated in other lights, and referred to for other purposes, become the fit objects of the subordinate mental qualities, fall entirely, where evidence is concerned, under the dominion of that faculty; these are propositions very insufficiently inculcated as principles, and of which practice therefore may be expected to exhibit the frequent violation." Goddard's Bamp. Lect. p. 6. The same sentiment occurs frequently in the work.

P. 51. l. 10. *attempts to demonstrate the distinctive truths of Christianity*] This statement does not appear to need proof. The theological world indeed would seem to be more and more inclining, as time advances, to bishop Watson's way of thinking, even in regard to the fundamental truths of all religion—"There was a time when I was fond of metaphysical inquiries into the nature of the Supreme Being, and much delighted with the works of Cudworth, King, Clarke, Leibnitz, and other acute reasoners on the subject; but I have long thought that the motions of the heavenly bodies, the propagation and growth of animals and plants, the faculties of the human mind, and even the ability of moving my hand up and down by a simple volition, afford, when deliberately reflected on, more convincing arguments against Atheism, than all the recondite lucubrations of the most profound philosophers." Charge to the Clergy of Landaff, June, 1795.

P. 52. l. 15. *if we mean with Leibnitz what is proved by a metaphysical necessity*] See Epist. II. ad Spizelium.

P. 55. l. 6. *The argument from signs*] On the nature and application of this kind of reasoning, and for an elucidation of my meaning throughout this argument, I must be content at present to direct the reader to "The notes of the Church, as laid down by Cardinal Bellarmin, examined and confuted;" "The case and great moment of

the Notes of the Church, as delivered by C. Bellarmin, De Notis Ecclesiæ, justified;" "A vindication of the brief discourse concerning the notes of the Church," in answer to the foregoing; "Advice to the Confuter of Bellarmin;" "A Defence of the Confuter of Bellarmin," second note, &c. &c.: all in 1687.

P. 56. l. 21. *down (or, as some Romanists will have it, up) to the note of the name Catholic*] The grounds upon which our own Church may claim the epithet, are thus stated by bishop Van Mildert: "If then the appellation of Catholic could without a solecism be applied to any national or particular church, our own might perhaps lay better claim to it than any that has appeared since the first establishment of Christianity. She is Catholic in her actual communion with every pure and genuine branch of the Christian church, and in her desire to extend that union wherever it can be done without a violation of essential principles. She is Catholic in the soundness of her creed, and in the care she has taken to restore and to preserve uncorrupted "the faith once delivered to the saints." She is Catholic also in the real liberality of her sentiments towards those who refuse to unite with her; a liberality shewing itself not in affected indifference to the truths she has espoused, nor in an unworthy suppression of her own belief; but in disclaiming any external coercion to compel assent, and in forbearing harsh or offensive conduct towards the members of other churches, or of other congregations, at variance with herself." Eighth Bampt. Lect. p. 240. Cf. Jackson's Works, XII. 158.

P. 58. l. 24. *unless the true faith shall have itself been ascertained previously*] "It behoveth us rather to search the Scriptures, as Christ hath advised us, and thereby to assure ourselves of the Church of God; for by this trial, and this alone, it may be known. Therefore St. Paul calleth the Church the Spouse of Christ, for that she ought in all things to give ear to the voice of the Bridegroom. Likewise he calleth the Church the pillar of the truth, for that she stayeth herself only by the word of God; without

which word the Church, were it never so beautiful, should be no church. The ancient father Irenæus saith; "Columna . . . . et firmamentum ecclesiæ est evangelium, et Spiritus vitæ.' St. Augustine saith: 'Sunt certi libri Dominici, quorum auctoritati utrique consentimus. Ibi quæramus Ecclesiam; ibi discutiamus causam nostram.' And again: 'Nolo humanis documentis, sed divinis oraculis sanctam ecclesiam demonstrari.' Likewise saith Chrysostom: 'Nullo modo cognoscitur . . . quæ sit vera Ecclesia Christi, nisi tantummodo per scripturas.' And again: '[Christus] mandat ut . . . volentes firmitatem accipere veræ fidei ad nullam rem fugiant nisi ad scripturas. Alioqui si ad alia respexerint, scandalizabuntur et peribunt, non intelligentes quæ sit vera Ecclesia. Et per hoc incident in abominationem derelectionis, quæ stat in locis sanctis Ecclesiæ.' By these ancient learned Fathers it is plain, that the Church of God is known by God's word only, and none otherwise."—Bishop Jewel's Defence of the Apology, part I. on the title of the Apology; and references to Irenæus, Augustin and Chrysostom, the Parker Society's edition, p. 153.

P. 60. l. 23. *in the subsequent part of our inquiry*] See Sermon V. infra.

P. 62. l. 22. *who cannot endure suspense*] Mr. Keble says, when pointing out the evils which must be encountered by one who should leave the church of England for that of Rome, and the "aggravation of the spiritual dangers" with which such a step must be attended, "I am persuaded that the moral difficulties, which have now been touched upon, would be generally felt by good minds as quite irresistible, but for that longing for assurance—perfect rest of mind and heart—which might perhaps not unaptly be called the 'last infirmity' of saintly spirits." Preface to Sermons, 1848.

P. 63. l. 4. *reasonings a priori and reasonings a posteriori*] For a statement of the nature of each of these forms of reasoning, see Van Mildert's second volume of Boyle Lectures, and particularly Sermons thirteen and nineteen.

Consult also Waterland's copious and elaborate Dissertation, limiting the range of the *a priori* argument, vol. IV. Oxford edition, 1823. I should observe with reference to the former's observations on Luke xii. 57, that he qualifies them afterwards in a note [See Appendix to Sermon 13,] where he says, "It is true our Lord here appeals in some way to *the good sense* of the Jews, and both here and elsewhere *reasons* with them on the evidences of his mission," though "not," he adds, "as *philosophers* who know nothing of religion but by the light of nature."

P. 72. l. 10. "*They see, and perceive not*"] Bishop of Calcutta's Evidences of Revealed Religion, Lect. XXIV. vol. II. p. 522.

P. 75. l. 22. *Even the child meets with what suits his opening capacities*] Id. Lect. XIV. p. 35. The whole Lecture should be read in connexion with the observations here made.

P. 77. l. 6. *whose religion involves no intellectual exercise.*] See Foster's Essays on the aversion of men of taste to Evangelical Religion.—Essays, p. 269 of ninth edition.

P. 78. l. 14. *whatsoever of simply human material*] The difficulty of the task of separation is acknowledged on all sides, and most freely in the case of the Christian mysteries. Bishop Jeremy Taylor writes thus strongly with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. "He who goes about to speak of the mystery of the Trinity, and does it by words and names of man's invention, talking of essences, and existences, hypostases and personalities, priorities in coequalities, and unity in pluralities, may amuse himself, and build a tabernacle in his head, and talk something he knows not what; but the good man that feels the power of the Father, and to whom the Son is become wisdom, sanctification, and redemption, in whose heart the love of the Spirit is shed abroad; this man, though he understands nothing of what is unintelligible, yet he alone understands the Christian doctrine of the Trinity." Sermons on John vii. 17. Via Intelligentiæ. But on the perils of the Church from false doctrine and heresy, and the consequent *neces-*

sity of settling and enlarging formularies, see Dr. Burton's Bampton Lectures passim; the bishop of Hereford's Eighth Bampton Lecture; and Mr. Erskine's Evidences, in which he writes, "These tests and summaries originated from doctrinal errors and metaphysical speculations in religion; and in consequence of this, they are not so much intended to be the repositories of truth, as *barriers* against the encroachment of erroneous opinions." §. IV.

P. 81. l. 12. *This prejudice against prejudice*] See Dr. Hawkins's Sermon on the duty of private judgment, p. 22.

P. 83. l. 5. "*While each other science*," *say they*] This statement occurs together with others, characterized by a similar boldness, in Theodore Parker's twelfth Essay, entitled, "Thoughts on Theology," Boston, 1843.

P. 84. l. 22. "*the operations of the intellect*"] Bishop of Calcutta's Evidences of Christianity, vol. II. p. 524.

SERMON III.

P. 88. l. 6. *the existence of secondary causes*] The inadequacy of the causes assigned by Gibbon to account for the phenomena which attended the propagation and establishment of the Christian faith is abundantly shewn by bishop Watson in his Apology for Christianity; see particularly Letter I.

P. 89. l. 18. *did not treat those with whom they conversed*] "This is an evidence on which the Apostle Paul frequently rests the whole weight of the Gospel." Erskine's Evid. see Introd.

P. 91. l. 4. *The diverse conceptions of the light of nature*] I have expressed myself too strongly perhaps in saying that all the various notions of Natural religion are merely modifications of the several views set forth in the text. But the subject cannot now be dilated upon.

P. 92. l. 9. "*rays of heavenly light.*"] See Bramhall's "Catching of the Leviathan," at the beginning. Ellis calls them "inward signatures, congenite impressions, inbred

opinions, notions grafted in, and written upon the heart, interwoven with our very nature, springing up from the natural fecundity of the mind, &c. &c." Knowledge of Divine Things, p. 501. Also Id. c. 3, entitled, Brief considerations on Mr. Locke's hypothesis, &c. &c.

P. 93. l. 21. *apart from the influences of direct communication*] "It is indeed hardly possible to suppose that these truths were not revealed to man from the very beginning. For, can it reasonably be imagined that Adam was left (even in his primeval condition, when his faculties were unclouded by sin and corruption) to acquire the knowledge of his Creator from such proofs only as the light of nature could afford him? or that he was suffered to remain in a state of uncertainty and conjecture respecting the continuance of his being, his future destination, the purposes of his creation, the duties which he had to perform, the happiness provided for him and the means of attaining it? On all these points, so essential to his comfort and well-being, must we not almost necessarily conclude, that he derived instruction immediately from the Fountain of wisdom?" Van Mildert's Fourteenth Boyle Lecture; the whole of which should be read in connexion with our present point.

P. 95. l. 6. *The Protestant has been asking for centuries*] See Marsh's Comparative View, &c. ch. I and IV.

P. 97. l. 22. *Whether or no what we read in the moral works*] For instance, Dr. Burton says, "Quotations might be given from almost all the Fathers, which would shew their firm belief that Plato was indebted to Moses for many of his opinions;".....not only to have agreed with him by a "coincidence of thought, but to have actually profited by the Jewish writings. Nor was this notion peculiar to the Christian Fathers." He mentions amongst others Josephus, Philo Judæus and "Numenius, a Platonist of the second century, who went so far as to say, What is Plato, but Moses Atticizing?" His references are to Brucker, vol. III. p. 332, where the reader will find an elaborate discussion of the subject. Fabricius Bibl. Gr. II.

p. 40, and Waterland's Charge to the Clergy of Middlesex, 1731, vol. VIII. p. 1. See also Gray's Connexion of the Sacred Writings, &c. &c., 1812.

P. 98. l. 1. *precepts to the sons of Noah*] "If we inquire of the Jews (and they for many ages were the only school of true theology and learning in the world) we shall find them unanimous in opinion, that the law of nature could not possibly be grounded on the determinations of reason, because of its inconstancy and uncertainty; and that it could not induce an obligation, without some superior authority, to which it must be subject; but was shewed and commanded to human kind by the great Author of their being, and which they called the precepts of the sons of Noah. This they affirmed to be universal, natural law; the true and living sacrifices of the mind not peculiar to any nation, sect or family; which none, however holy or distinguished, could challenge as their own, but given as a rule to the whole race of men, (which by being universally dispersed and approved was said by the heathens to be engraven by their Jup. Opt. Max. on the minds of men,) that hence it became obligatory on human nature, and through all ages; from this proceeded all those universal duties, together with that moral and civil philosophy, by which the whole race of men from their entrance into the world are bound, both towards the Supreme Being, and towards one another; as containing a perfect rule of duty, worship, and whatever God required of them. That these were before the written law, and everywhere binding, appears from the book of Job, wherein most of the precepts of the sons of Noah, or the natural law, are to be found;—as against idolatry, xxxi. 26: against blasphemy, l. 5: against murder, xxxi. 29, and xxxiv. 14: against adultery, xxxi. 9, and xxiv. 15: against theft, xxiv. and xxxi. 7: and of judgment in the passages of idolatry and adultery: besides the reverential acknowledgment of God, his providence &c., and a pious worship of him by prayer and sacrifice; that the written law was only a repetition of them, with an addition of some things pe-

culiar to themselves. So Grotius says, that Moses did not enlarge on the precepts of Noah, because they were known to all mankind. These precepts were, by God's command, transmitted to posterity; but after the dispersion they became much impaired and obscured; and a dark night of ignorance and barbarity covered the earth." Ellis's Knowledge of Divine Things, p. 236. The Jewish writers concur in maintaining that certain short precepts of moral duty were orally enjoined by God on the parent of mankind, and afterwards on the sons of Noah. Whether these were simply preserved by tradition, or whether by an innate moral faculty mankind had the power of constantly discerning them, seems to have been an unsettled point. The principal of these Divine rules are called, for distinction, 'the seven precepts of the sons of Noah.' There is however some variance in the lists, as Selden has given them, from the ancient writers. That most received consists of seven prohibitions; namely, of idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, theft, rebellion and cutting a limb from a living animal. The last of these, the sense of which, however, is controverted, as well as the third, but no other, are indicated in the ninth chapter of Genesis." Hallam's Introd. to the Lit. of Europe, vol. II. p. 510. See also the next section, and his reference to Selden's Table Talk.

P. 98. l. 18. "*The mind cannot*," *says bishop Van Mildert*] See his fourteenth Boyle Lect., ut supra. The quotation from Aristotle, in the next paragraph, is from Nic. Eth. IX. c. 9.

P. 101. l. 9. *the only security &c.*] Bishop Blackhall's sixth Boyle Lect. vol. I. p. 598 of the Collection.

P. 103. l. 19. *comprehend our wishes and most vague anticipations*] "Faith, then, as being a principle for the multitude and for conduct, is influenced more by what (in language familiar to us in this place) are called εἰκότα than by σημεῖα—less by evidence, more by previously-entertained principles, views, and wishes." And again: "It is scarcely necessary to point out how much our inclinations have to

do with our belief. It is almost a proverb, that persons believe what they wish to be true." Newman's ninth Sermon before the University.

P. 105. l. 7. *any of those deistical theories*] For confirmation of the statements made in this paragraph, it may be enough to refer the student to Leland's View of the principal Deistical writers, &c. &c.; Bp. Butler's Analogy, and Bp. Berkeley's Minute Philosopher.

P. 107. l. 28. *What though the verbal analogy*] Nothing can be more lucid and satisfactory on this subject than Van Mildert, in his sixth Bamp. Lect.: "This principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture, is what theologians call the Analogy of Faith; an expression borrowed perhaps from a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where he exhorts those who 'prophesy' in the Church (that is, those who exercise the office of authoritatively expounding the Scriptures) to prophesy according to the '*proportion*,' or, as the word is in the original, the *analogy* 'of faith." [Rom. xii. 6.] To the same effect many commentators interpret St. Peter's maxim, that 'no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,' implying, &c." [See Horsley's ingenious sermon on this text, 2 Pet. i. 20.] Afterwards, when pursuing the subject, he describes the *verbal* analogy of Scripture to be "the collation of parallel texts illustrative of its characteristic diction and phraseology: the *historical* analogy, the collation of parallel events and circumstances for the elucidation of facts: and the *doctrinal* analogy, the collation of parallel instructions relative to matters of faith and practice." pp. 149 and 151 of third edition.

P. 111. l. 3. *the so-called neutral position of the atheist*] The observations here made are intended to bear upon Dr. Chalmers's statements in his chapter "on the way of proposing the argument to atheistical Infidels." See the 9th chapter of his Evidences and Authority of the Christian Revelation.—The reference to Aristotle is to the 7th book of his Nic. Ethics.

P. 113. l. 27. *every fresh accession of true knowledge*]

"There are indeed, in every branch of human knowledge, certain principles, and certain facts, so clearly and indubitably established, as to make it incredible that any system of Divine truth, rightly understood, should be found to contradict them." Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures. He quotes from Turretin: "Supponuntur communes notiones tum metaphysicæ, tum physicæ, tum mathematicæ .....Supponuntur etiam a scriptoribus sacris axiomata practica, ut &c.....Speciatim circa Deum multa supponunt, ut &c." See Appendix p. 105. The context of the Lecture shews that by these principles and axioms are meant the results of human thought and learning, and not the impressions with which the inquirer commences his task. Thus he says, "The *adept* in ancient languages, in philology, rhetoric, logic, ethics, metaphysics, geography, chronology, history ancient and modern, will have a conspicuous advantage in the study of the sacred writings over him who is deficient in these attainments." And the argument *in loco* tends to shew that the "various improvements in literature &c. &c. corroborate" the truths contained in Scripture, and "enable us to retort upon the sceptic" and the scorner.

P. 116. l. 4. "*They saw the miracles,*" *writes Dr. Chalmers*] See Evidences &c., chap. X., on the supreme authority of Revelation.

P. 117. l. 11. "*The person,*" *says profesor Whewell*] See his Bridgewater Treatise, chap. VI., on the Deductive Habits.

P. 119. l. 21. "*Its authors,*" *says the dean of Carlisle*] See Hinds's Inquiry into the Proofs, Nature, and Extent of Inspiration &c. p. 68; also Beattie's Evidences &c. chap. XI. §. 4.

SERMON IV.

P. 123. l. 8. *furnishes the only, or &c.*] "It is obvious that Christianity and the proof of it are both historical. And even natural religion is properly a matter of fact."

Bishop Butler's Analogy, part II. c. 8. §. 5. See bishop of Hereford's Philosophical Evidence of Christianity, p. I. &c.

P. 127. l. 13. *it must sooner or later depend*] Neander says: "Could the plan have been carried out, to destroy every existing copy of the Scriptures, the *very source* would have been cut off from which true Christianity and the life of the Church was ever freshly springing with unconquerable vigour. Let preachers of the Gospel, bishops and clergy, be executed; it was all to no purpose, so long as this book, by which new teachers could always be formed, remained in the hands of the Christians.....But exposed to these manifold sources of corruption in human nature, Christianity, without the well-spring of Scripture from which it could ever be restored back to its purity, would, as all history teaches, have been soon overwhelmed, and have become no longer recognizable under the load of falsehoods and corruptions." Torrey's translation, vol. I. p. 203.

P. 128. l. 12. *choice of living instruments*] See Dr. Hawkins's fourth Bampton Lecture, p. 113, where he is noticing the channels both of the proof and of the statement of Christian doctrine: "We are not directed to his written word for the primary instruction of the truth; but man is to teach man." Also Professor Garbett's admirable sermon on Modern Philosophical Infidelity, or the Personality of God, throughout. 1849.

P. 129. l. 1. *by the wisdom of God interwoven with the history*] "Even the *doctrines* of the Christian Revelation," writes bishop Horsley, "were not originally delivered in a system, but interwoven in the history of our Saviour's life."

Id. l. 14. "*Christianity is a fact*"] Newman's Essay on Development, p. 1. of introduction. "The Bible is a fact." Maurice's Kingdom of Christ, vol. II. p. 271: "The Church exists as a fact, the Bible shows what that fact means. The Bible is a fact, the Church shows what that fact means." See the bishop of Hereford's explanation of Bishop Butler's and his own use of the word *fact* in his note, p. 27, of his Inaugural Lecture, 1836. See also Lecture V. infra.

P. 133. l. 7. *The views of man contained in the Sacred history*] Compare lord Barrington's sketch of the early history of mankind, in his Essay on the Dispensations of God, &c.

P. 135. l. 2. *The "august apparatus," as it has been called, of miracles and prophecies*] Davison's first Discourse on Prophecy, p. 22.

Id. l. 16. *between the leading schools of the Greek philosophy, and the sects*] For the authorities adduced in support of the common theory, according to which the tenets of the Pharisees are connected with the Stoic, and those of the Sadducees with the Epicurean philosophy, see Brucker's Hist. Phil. vol. II. p. 728, &c., where he discusses the whole matter. Of the authority of Josephus however he says: "Nec Josephi hic respicienda est auctoritas, qui inepto gentis suæ eruditos cum Græcis comparandi studio tres illas sectas (he includes the Secta Karæorum) Judaicas cum tribus Græcorum sectis celebrioribus contulit, ne haberent hi, quo Judæis præferrentur."

P. 136. l. 15. *It is this unity in multiplicity*] Bishop Van Mildert speaks of the *miracles* recorded in the Old Testament as "connected in a most remarkable manner with the *system* carried on from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ;"—and again, "as exhibiting proofs of the Divine agency carried on in one continued series." See twenty-first Boyle Lecture. The same is said by him with reference to prophecy in the following Lecture. See also the Preface to lord Barrington's Essay on the Dispensations of God to mankind, as revealed in Scripture.

P. 140. l. 5. *It was a sound and healthy feeling, argues Neander*] Vol. I. p. 240. Compare vol. II. p. 6.

P. 141. l. 11. *in a former discourse*] See Lecture I.

P. 144. l. 1. *contradictory functions of these several offices*] The passage quoted in this paragraph is taken from the Bishop of Calcutta's seventeenth Lecture. Much more is comprised in the celebrated proposition of Pascal: "En Jésus-Christ toutes les contradictions sont accordées."

P. 147. l. 10. *times posterior to the teaching of our Lord*]

Dr. Eveleigh's second, third, and fourth Bampton Lectures contain a general summary of the history of Christianity; and the passage quoted in p. 154 is from the same work. The subject of Dr. White's Bampton Lectures is well known, and it is to them that I make allusion in p. 156, 157.

P. 157. l. 23. "*The Reformation*," *says a living writer*] The Bishop of Calcutta, in his twenty-sixth Lecture.

P. 161. l. 20. "*ever greater than the emergence*"] These words are taken from Newman's Essay on Development, p. 449.

P. 163. l. 21. *perceptions included in our own mental constitution*] These are perhaps carried farthest by Tertullian. "He adduced," writes Neander, "as evidence for Christian truth against polytheism, the spontaneous expressions of an irrepressible, immediate, religious consciousness in common life,—the testimony of the soul, which he held to be Christian by nature[a],—the testimony of the simple, uncultivated, ignorant soul, previous to all cultivation[b]. In his apology before the pagans he makes appeal to this witness of the soul 'which though confined in the prison of the body, though led astray by wrong training, though enfeebled by the desires and passions, yet when it comes to itself, as out of a fit of intoxication, as out of a sleep, out of a disease, and when conscious of its healthful condition, calls God by this name alone, because it is the proper name of the true God—Great God—good God—and what God gives,—these are common expressions with all. It adjures also this God as its judge, in such expressions as these:—God is my witness—to God I commit my cause—God will requite me. Finally in using these expressions, it looks not to the Capitol, but upward to heaven; for it knows the seat of the living God—from Him and from thence it descended[c]." Neander, Church History, vol. I. p. 243.

[a] De testimonio animæ c. 1: Te simplicem et rudem et impolitam et idioticam compello, qualem habent, qui te solam habent, illam ipsam de compito, de trivio, de textrino totam.

[b] Apologet. 17.

[c] Quæ licet carcere corporis pressa, licet institutionibus parvis circumscripta, licet libidinibus ac concupiscentiis evigorata, licet falsis Diis ex-

SERMON V.

P. 165. l. 11. *miracles, properly so called*] Mr. Locke is severe upon those who, when writing on miracles, do not *define* the term. Discourse of Miracles, p. 1. Definitions however have abounded since his time; and for these, as well as for further discussions of the matter contained in this sermon, most readers have it in their power to consult books too numerous to be here specified.

P. 167. l. 11. *a remark of Bishop Horsley*] See his second sermon on John xx. 29.

P. 171. l. 26. *miracles of Apollonius and of Mahomet*] I have been reminded that Mahomet did not lay claim to the working of miracles; but this is a point involved in some uncertainty. Richardus says of him: "Nunc quidem dicit de seipso inaudita miracula, aliquando autem dicit se nullum miraculum fecisse." See the long quotation in Van Mildert's Boyle Lectures, vol. I. p. 420, from Richardi Confut. Muham.; see also Jenkin's Reasonableness of Christianity, part III. c. 7. The Bishop of Hereford says: "Mahomet evidently felt the want of miraculous power to secure a reception to his pretended revelations as divine; and hence propagated the belief that he was an illiterate person, calling himself 'the illiterate prophet;' that the Koran might thus be a *standing miracle* in itself." A passage cited from the Koran (chap. xxix.) by Dr. White, in his Bampton Lectures (p. 203, note), to this effect is: "Thou couldest not read any book before this, neither couldest thou write it with thy right hand; for then had the gainsayers justly doubted the divine original thereof." This mode of *miraculous* pretence was perhaps

ancillata, cum tamen resipiscit, ut ex crapula, ut ex somno, ut ex aliqua valetudine, et sanitatem suam patitur, Deum nominat, hoc solo nomine, quia proprio Dei veri. Deus magnus, Deus bonus, et quod Deus dederit, omnium vox est. Judicem quoque contestatur illum, Deus videt, et Deo commendo, et Deus mihi reddet. Denique, pronuntians hæc, non ad Capitolium sed ad cœlum respicit. Novit enim sedem Dei vivi, ab illo et inde descendit.

suggested to him by that passage of St. John, "and the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" ch. vii. v. 15.—Essay on the Philosophical Evidence of Christianity, (p. 135, note). It may be conceded that Mahomet did not pretend to work miracles, in the usual acceptation of the word. But I was not thinking so much of Mahomet himself, as of the pretensions of his followers with respect to him, when I wrote the words in the text.

P. 172. l. 13. *The miracles of Moses*] These are tested by Leslie's criteria, and compared with the miracles recorded in the New Testament, by Horne [Vol. I. c. 4, of Introduction]. See his references to Douglas, Hey, Price, Campbell, Collyer, Faber, and others.

P. 174. l. 1. *The feeling of surprise or astonishment*] This cavil has been revived of late years. "But can it be supposed that God would make his only true religion, Christianity, depend for ever chiefly on the astonishment produced on people who lived ages ago? Even if miracles are performed *now*, their effect would fall very short of that which they produced eighteen centuries ago. But the fact is that they are not now performed, and they have not been performed since the human mind began to acquire a 'collective maturity,' as if Providence wished to shew that they are not the best means of conviction. Yet divines insist on related miracles as the best and soundest foundation of Christianity." Blanco White's Life, Vol. III. p. 95.

P. 176. l. 1. *whose wonder ended in wondering*] See bishop Horsley's Sermon on Mark vii. 37.

P. 179. l. 7. *which of you convinceth me of sin?*] Dr. Tatham extends the application of our Lord's words to the moral characteristics of the Gospel. "You deist, you freethinker, you minute philosopher, you unbeliever of whatever name, however inveterate the prejudices or abandoned the habits with which you labour, we can trust you with this important question, 'Which of you convinceth me of

sin?' Which of you can impeach the morality of the Gospel?" Bampton Lect. Vol. II. p. 270.

P. 179. l. 19. *To these he himself appeals*] "Undoubtedly the strongest evidence of this (viz. the Divine mission of Christ and the Divine authorship of his religion) arises from the wonderful and well attested miracles which he wrought from the beginning to the end of his ministry." Bishop Porteus, Summary of the Principal Evidences of the Truth and Divine Origin of the Christian Revelation, Prop. xi. . . . . It has been thought indeed that in this appeal [John xiv. 10.] we must understand our Lord to be referring 'in part but by no means exclusively' to his miracles. Without determining the point however, we may assent without hesitation, to the opinion held in the same quarter, that the miracles of our Lord are not to be severed from the other acts of his ministry, and that, in fact, they cannot be *thoroughly* appreciated or understood except in connexion with his entire character and life. —Voices of the Church in reply to Dr. D. F. Strauss, p. 398.

P. 180. l. 25. *one of the distinguishing dogmas*] "He who in our days has given the greatest impulse to Germany is neither Kant nor Lessing, nor the great Frederick; it is Benedict Spinoza. Mark the spirit which lurks in the depth of his poetry, his criticism, his philosophy, like the unwieldy tempter under the wide-spread tree of knowledge. Göthe, Schelling, Hegel, Schleiermacher—to speak only of the master-minds, are the fruit of his works. In his treatise on theology, and his astonishing letter to Oldenbourg, would be found the germ of all the propositions lately maintained in the German method of interpreting the Scriptures. From him especially came the practice of expounding the Bible through the aid of natural phenomena. He had somewhere said, 'All that is related in the revealed books, happened in conformity with the established laws of the universe." A school rapidly took possession of this principle. To those who desired to remain suspended in scepticism, it offered the immense advantage of preserving the practical teachings of revelation by means of a con-

cealment, or of a preliminary explanation. The Gospel ceased not to be a code of divine morals, and no one's sincerity was called in question. Sacred history hovered above all controversy. What more! The point was to recognise once for all, that what is now presented to us by tradition as a supernatural phenomenon, a miracle, was in reality but a very simple fact, magnified at first by the surprise of the senses, sometimes an error in the text, sometimes a copyist's sign, more frequently a prodigy which never existed, save in the arcana of grammar or of Eastern rhetoric. The efforts they made to lower the Gospel to the proportions of a moral chronicle, can scarcely be imagined. It was deprived of its glory, to be saved under the appearance of mediocrity. All that was narrow in this system speedily became ridiculous in its application; for it is easier to deny the Gospel, than to reduce it to the standard of a manual of practical philosophy. The pen which wrote the 'Provinciales' would be necessary to lay bare the strange consequences of this theology." Quinet on Strauss's Life of Jesus, p. 4. See a Summa Impietatis Spinozisticæ in Brucker, Hist. Phil. vol. V. p. 693; where he notices Bayle, Buddeus and others, as having detected a *Spinozismus ante Spinozam*: viz. in the Eleatic, the Stoic, and the Cabbalistic systems. The reader will find each discussion in its proper place in Brucker.

P. 182. l. 20. *a sagacious writer on statistics*] Mr. Malthus employs the argument alluded to, when dealing with the theories of Condorcet. The quotation lower down in this paragraph is from Beattie's Evidences, c. ii. §. 1. Locke also says, "What is the uttermost power of natural agents or created beings, men of the greatest reach cannot discover; but that it is not equal to God's omnipotency, is obvious to every man's understanding; so that the superior power is an easy as well as sure guide to divine revelation, attested by miracles, where they are brought as credentials to an embassy from God." Disc. on Miracles.

P. 185. l. 14. *to seal with their life-blood*] "We learn from the history of fanaticism and superstition that men have

died martyrs to opinions unintelligible, absurd, immoral, impious. All this may be allowed, but the inference which is generally drawn by sceptical men from such observations, cannot be allowed; the inference is this—that the fortitude of the apostles, in sustaining persecution, is no proof of the truth of the Christian religion, inasmuch as an equal degree of fortitude has often been displayed by other men in support of opinions evidently not true. This inference cannot be allowed, for this reason—that an essential difference is to be made between him who dies in attestation of a matter of fact, and him who dies in attestation of an opinion. The apostles died in attestation of their having seen Jesus work miracles, whilst he was alive; and of their having conversed with him after his resurrection from the dead. These are not abstruse opinions, but things which either did or did not happen; any man is competent to say whether he saw them happen or not; and the apostles died in maintaining that they did see them happen: they were 'eyewitnesses of his majesty.' The Christian martyrs who had never seen Jesus, nor been eyewitnesses of any miracles wrought by him, or by others in his name, but who died, rather than they would abandon the belief they had adopted, contributed by their constancy to the propagation of the Christian religion; but they did not establish its truth in the same way that the apostles did."—Bishop Watson's Sermon on 2 Pet. i. 16.

P. 185. l. 23. *their impossibility*] On this point Dr. Beard writes thus: "With atheism for a first principle, it may be impossible to shew how a miracle can be; but even atheism cannot disprove the possibility of a miracle; since it cannot presume to say, in a world where there is no governing mind, what combinations may take place—what extraordinary junctions may be formed—what new analogies may be developed—what marvellous facts may transpire. Where all is chance, all is uncertain; and the attempt to reason from the past to the present or the future is utterly idle. But as philosophy cannot shew miracle to be impossible, so is it enough for the Christian to prove,

that on his ground there is no inherent improbability in miracles; since the moment this is done, testimony may step in and give its evidence. If it is asserted that analogy is against miracle, we ask, what analogy? General analogy is out of the question. What has the ebb and flow of the tide to do with the introduction of a new religion? Analogy is of value only in things of a like nature. The case before us is the establishment of the Gospel. To what class of facts does this belong? Where can we look for our analogies? Only to Moses, and there we find miracles. Revelation is a case *per se*. It is a special disclosure of truth touching God, duty, and eternity; and in consequence cannot take rank with other things in which the human and the ordinary predominate. Vain in consequence, is it to look for similarity to civilisation, philosophies, social institutions, worldly wisdom. Revelation stands by itself, and has its own analogies. Besides, it betrays an ignorance of the nature of the argument to demand analogies for the justification of miracle. Miracle has force of evidence, because it is not analogical. In its very essence it is extraordinary, and cannot therefore form part of any regular sequence. It is God made manifest in a way to rouse attention, and lead the thoughts, together with the affections, at once to him."

P. 188. l. 3. *Miracles, they say, may have been wrought*] See Westminster Review for April to July, 1836.

P. 190. l. 2. *by the countrymen of the daring Neologist*] See the "Fallacy of the Mythical theory of Dr. D. F. Strauss illustrated from the history of Martin Luther, and from actual Mohammedan myths of the life of Jesus." For Strauss's sense of the word myth, and Bretschneider's definition, see Review of Strauss, Hegel, and their opinions, p. 25. The subject is ingeniously handled by Mr. Theodore Parker, Miscellaneous Writings, p. 300. Also see Hagenbach's statements and references, vol. II. p. 410, et seq.

P. 191. l. 19. *which of the two, prophecy or miracle, affords the stronger evidence*] This subject is discussed in Dean Stanhope's eighth Boyle Lecture. See §. iv. The quotation

in p. 194 is from the same Lecture. "The early Christian writers and apologists appeal in very express terms to the Messiah's miracles. Thus Quadratus appeals very strongly to those miracles. Justin Martyr asserts the performance of miracles by Jesus in as forcible words as language will admit, and assigns the reason why he rather had recourse to the argument from *prophecy*, than that from *miracles;* viz. that his opponents would ascribe the latter to magic. Irenæus, Lactantius, Tertullian, Origen, Augustin, and Jerome, speak of Christ's miracles (and often, indeed, of those wrought subsequently to the apostolic times), and notice the same evasion on the part of the adversaries to Christianity."—Dr. Olinthus Gregory's Letters, vol. I. p. 173.

P. 201. l. 4. *the solitary datum*] "It is on the basis of our intelligent and moral constitution that in some respects they" (the truths of which he had been speaking) "are preferably erected."—Dr. Goddard's fifth Bampton Lecture, p. 126.

P. 202. l. 16. *the connexion of miracles with the proof of natural religion*] Some remarks upon this point are to be found in Mr. Newman's second Sermon preached before the University.

P. 204. l. 5. *the apostle Thomas*] See bishop Horsley's Second Sermon on John xx. 29.

Id. l. 22. *the greatest number resemble that class*] See Voices of the Church, &c. &c. ut supra.

SERMON VI.

P. 208. l. 5. *internal evidences*] Bishop Marsh is careful to distinguish between different sorts of internal evidences. See his Appendix to Lectures, Summary statement, &c., at the beginning.

Id. l. 22. *the evidence arising from those spiritual influences*] "The greatest witness to the truth of the Christian religion is the Holy Spirit."—Lord Barrington's Essay on the Dispensations of God, p. 1. of Introduction.

P. 209. l. 18. *supplying strength and clearness to the rational faculty*] Dr. Goddard says, "Were truth and evidence still imparted directly from on high, now as heretofore, their correspondent object would be the intellect;" and "The Holy Spirit neither applies himself to qualities of the mind unappropriate to his purpose, nor does he change their nature,"—Fourth Bampton Lecture, p. 103.

P. 211. l. 1. *an absolutely distinctive feature of the Gospel*] "What are all the notices of the Spirit in the Old Testament, compared with the habitual recognition of His presence in the Church and in its members, which is to be traced in almost every page of the apostolical Epistles? It is one of the great and marked distinctions between the Old Testament and the New."—Dr. Hawkins's Eighth Bampton Lecture; see the whole Sermon.

P. 213. l. 17. "*For*," *says Bp. Sanderson*] See sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 7, at the beginning.

P. 214. l. 17. *the apprehension of angels*] See Hagenbach's account of the speculations of Abelard and others, in §. 170 of vol. I. (Hist. of Doctr.), and especially notes 3 and 8.

P. 218. l. 12. *special calls and directions*] For a complete exposure of the pretensions of the Methodists, see Bishop Mant's Bampton Lectures, and his authorities. It is a relief to turn to the simple and definite view of the Spirit's operations set forth in one of the Homilies of our Church. There we have it stated that repentance, contrition, love of the brethren, peace of mind and conscience, are all God's work within us, by his Holy Spirit. The Homily indeed calls these conditions of mind *miracles:* "Who worketh these great miracles in us? our worthiness, our deservings, our wits, our virtues? Nay; without the lively and secret inspiration of the Spirit, we cannot so much as speak the name of our Mediator, as St. Paul plainly testifieth, 'No man can once name our Lord Jesus Christ, but in the Holy Ghost.'" Yet it goes on to say, "If *any gift* we have wherewith we may work to the glory of God and profit of our neighbour, all is wrought by his own and

selfsame Spirit, which worketh his distributions peculiarly to every man as he will[d];"—thereby clearly acknowledging that we have no disposition, and far less the ability to do what is pleasing and acceptable to God, till we are influenced by the Spirit of God. "Christians ascribe, or ought to ascribe, every intellectual, moral, and spiritual attainment to God. And when we speak of the *ordinary* influences of the Spirit of God, we mean to impute to the operation of that Spirit our sanctification, all the actions of our Christian course, our constancy and perseverance, all particular graces and virtues which we seek at his hands, our adoption, our access to God and assistance in prayer, our joy and peace in believing, our support in trials and afflictions and deliverance from temptations, our continual progress in holiness." Dr. O. Gregory's Letters, II. p. 171.

P. 219. l. 11. *Swedenborg perhaps excepted*] Hagenbach's representation of the views of the Trinity entertained by Swedenborg would seem to set the matter at rest. See vol. II. p. 418, 419.

P. 221. l. 21. *What are the tests of the Spirit's influence*] See p. 232 infra, and the texts there quoted.

P. 223. l. 3. *the distinction recognized as subsisting between the ordinary and extraordinary gifts*] The substance of this paragraph and the quotation will be found in Dr. Hickes's sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 4; the Spirit of Enthusiasm exorcised, p. 4, 5. 53, &c.

P. 227. l. 12. "*in the very employment*" *of them*] See archbishop Whately's ninth Essay on St. Paul, p. 291.

P. 229. l. 24. *the learned prelate*] See Bishop Sanderson's sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 7.

P. 232. l. 23. *Archbishop Whately*] See ninth Essay on St. Paul, p. 319.

P. 236. l. 19. *demanding our cooperation*] "The Holy Spirit alters not the specific character of our faculties, disturbs not by his ordinary influences the proper course of them, comes into contact with them in a way not inconsistent with their customary exercise; and whatever can-

[d] Homily for Rogation Week, part III.

not, from either of these sources, be clearly and precisely collected, we are altogether without any proper liberty to assume; for it is to little purpose that the Scriptures have afforded us definite information, or have conveyed under various forms of expression, the caution not to be wise above what is written, if, from what they have told us on this or any other subject, we pass on into the regions of mere possibility. But further, in regard to this very point, holy writ has in the text enjoined circumspection. The injunction to "try the spirits whether they are of God," had no doubt a primary and especial application to the age of miracles, supposed a sort of discernment with which we are unprovided, because we have no power of employing it; but that in a modified sense it refers also to ordinary methods, is evident from our being furnished in the same Scriptures with a standard of doctrine in regard to the Divine influences, and with a criterion for ascertaining whether such graces from on high, as we still are taught to expect, have in any given instance been in fact imparted." Goddard's third Bampton Lecture, p. 49, 50.

P. 238. l. 24. *invite this holy guest*] Barrow's seventy-seventh sermon, at the end.

SERMON VII.

P. 243. l. 26. *Plato and other philosophers*] Consult Leland's Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Religion; Ellis's Knowledge of Divine Things, p. 456, et seq.

P. 247. l. 12. *this song of songs*] Mr. Horne has collected the opinions of the learned on the subject of the Song of Solomon, in the fourth volume of his Introduction; and he refers particularly to the "two learned and eloquent lectures devoted by bishop Lowth to an examination of this poem."

P. 248. l. 2. *As Aristotle quotes the poets*] See bishop Patrick's Preface to Paraphrase and Annotations on the

Song of Solomon. Cudworth has given a full account of the Atheistic hypothesis which made love to be an active principle, or cause of motion in the universe, quoting from Aristotle, Parmenides, Hesiod, Simmias Rhodius, and Aristophanes; and he shews also in what "rectified sense it may pass for true theology, that love is the supreme Deity and original of all things."—See Intell. System &c. vol. I. c. 3. §. 17, et seq.

P. 255. l. 17. *in fancy conceiving events*] See Dr. Thomas Brown's Philosophy of the human mind, c. 42.

P. 258. l. 2. *the darkest and grossest ingredients of the human mind*] See Fanaticism, by the author of Natural History of Enthusiasm. "If a definition as brief as possible were demanded, we should say that fanaticism is enthusiasm influenced by hatred," pp. 30, 76, &c.

P. 259. l. 7. *eulogised for its boldness*] "Boldness—the boldness of simplicity is the style of the Bible from first to last. Nowhere does it exhibit that sort of circumspection which distinguishes the purblind and uncertain discretion of man."—Id. p. 376.

P. 261. l. 27. *one of my predecessors*] See Nott's Sixth Bampton Lecture, p. 343; and his notes there on Quakerism and Methodism; and, more especially, his references at p. 335, to Leslie's Snake in the Grass, §. 7, and bishop Lavington's well-known work on the Enthusiasm of Methodists.

P. 263. l. 4. *and thus we might proceed*] This is done in the sequel of the sermon referred to in the preceding note; viz. the connexion is pointed out between Enthusiasm and Schism, and the ill effects from thence resulting to the Christian faith set forth at considerable length.

P. 266. l. 11. *the fits and starts of him who is impelled by mere feeling*] See Dr. Ogilvie's Sermons, p. 122.

P. 269. l. 15. *Millennarianism has, we know, made its appearance*] Hagenbach's Hist. of Doctrines, vol. II. §. 202.

P. 268. l. 7. *the order and earnestness with which pious minds*] I cannot forbear transcribing a note of bishop Van Mildert's which seems peculiarly applicable to the present

time. "As I do not profess to have bestowed minute attention on this part of my subject (nor indeed was it necessary to my purpose to give more than a very general outline of what relates to it) I must refer the reader to the many excellent writers who have made these the direct object of their study; a study, in which several able divines of the present day are deeply engaged. It is impossible, indeed, not to feel an increasing interest in researches of this kind, when we contemplate the fearful events which are continually taking place, and the manifest indication of some great purpose to which the Almighty is now directing the course of human affairs. Great caution however is requisite in the application of prophecy to events not yet fully accomplished; since much injury may unintentionally be done to the cause of Christianity by crude and injudicious speculations on so difficult a subject. It is an important observation of bishop Halifax, concerning the Apocalypse in particular, that 'our business is not to prophesy, but to interpret; not to foretell things before they are fulfilled, but after they are fulfilled, to illustrate the prediction from the event.' Had this rule been more generally attended to, much perplexity might perhaps have been avoided, in the discussion of the prophecies contained in this and other books of holy writ."—Boyle Lectures, vol. I. p. 61.

P. 268. l. 22. *The poetical imagery*] Hagenbach's History of Doctrines, §. 203.

P. 270. l. 14. *speculations of Aquinas*] See the chapter on 1 Cor. xv. 35, in Dr. Jackson's Works, vol. X.; and for a short account of the views of the Fathers on the subject of the resurrection of the body, and the speculations of Scotus Erigena, Aquinas, and others on the same subject, see Hagenbach's Hist. of Doctrines, §. 76, 140, 204. The same work may be consulted on all the points noticed in the latter part of this Lecture.

Id. l. 28. "*the bright regions of heaven*," *&c.*] "Both the mind of the age, and the degree of cultivation to which theologians had attained, were reflected in their repre-

sentations of heaven and hell. According to John Scotus Erigena, the spirit of man is resolved into God, a notion which he thought reconcilable with the idea of self-conscious continuance. The pantheistic sects of the middle ages went so far as to destroy all individuality, and to deny the future existence of man. The scholastics, whose principal happiness in this world consisted in making the most subtle distinctions, supposed that it would be especially the greater perfection of our intellectual powers which would constitute the blessedness of heaven; Duns Scotus started such questions as, whether the blessed would perceive the quidditates of things, etc. The enjoyments of refined sensuality were not quite excluded, though it was admitted that the highest and true pleasures consist principally in communion with God, and the mutual fellowship of the saints. Thomas Aquinas supposed different gifts (dotes) of blessedness. In addition to the *corona aurea*, which is given to all the blessed, there are particular *aureolæ* for martyrs and saints, for monks and nuns. The mystics also represented the world to come in bright colours. But the theologians of the present age exercised their powers of invention, especially in devising all sorts of ingenious punishments which the wicked would have to suffer in hell, after the example set before them by the horrible proceedings of the Inquisition."—See Hagenbach's History of Doctrines, especially sect. 209, and copious quotations from the authors therein mentioned.

SERMON VIII.

P. 277. l. 9. *Every conviction of the truth*] Davison on Prophecy, p. 507, third edition.

Id. l. 16. *a proper condition of mind*] For the qualifications needed by the religious student in order to a right appreciation of Evidence, see Dr. Jackson's Works, vol. III. ch. 8, "on the goodness or honesty of heart required by

our Saviour in fruitful hearers." Also Butler's Analogy, II. 8; Bradford's, Clarke's, and Bentley's Boyle Lectures; and Dr. Tatham's Bampton Lectures towards the end.

P. 280. l. 16. *at an early stage of our investigations*] See Sermon I.

P. 281. l. 25. *The principles there laid down*] The insufficiencies both of the Romanist's doctrine of infallibility, and of the evidence adduced by him in support of it, are shewn by Chillingworth, part II. c. 2; Jackson, passim; particularly in vol. II. p. 578 to 585. See also Dr. Hawkins's note to p. 197 of his Bampton Lectures.

P. 283. l. 17. *the notion of sinlessness*] Bishop Mant's Sixth and Seventh Bampton Lectures may be consulted on the matter of this paragraph.

P. 285. l. 8. *fall short of demonstration*] Lecture II.

P. 287. l. 5. *prejudice their eternity*] Bishop Jeremy Taylor's Works, VIII. p. 210. "And if infants die before the use of reason, it can do them no hurt that they were given to God in holy designation, it cannot any way be supposed and is not pretended to prejudice their eternity." See the whole argument.

P. 289. l. 20. *those who read a twofold revelation of the Divine will and government*] "On one side, we have a voice not of the world, proclaiming the truth taught, to be divine—on the other, we have the voice of nature, answering as it were to the challenge, and confirming the previous annunciation from heaven. We find two communications from the Deity to man, totally distinct in form, and yet closely agreeing in substance—the one made known to us by the experienced course of the world in which we live—the other, accredited by an infringement of that course, and yet addressing us by the established signs of human intercourse. This is a confirmation of a much stronger kind, than that derived to the theories of common science from their correspondence with the facts which are the subjects of them." Bishop of Hereford's Essay on the Philosophical Evidences of Christianity, p. 189.

P. 293. l. 3. *which had before been trodden*] See Bishop Browne's Procedure, Extent and Limits of the human Understanding. He says, in the introduction, that we have no immediate proper idea at all of God, or any of his attributes, as they are in themselves; or of any thing else in another world: and that consequently we are "under a necessity of conceiving all things supernatural by *analogy*, i. e. by *the mediation and substitution of those ideas we have of ourselves, and of all other things of nature.*" p. 2. Speaking afterwards of those who had misunderstood the observations of Archbishop King [in his sermon preached in 1709], and argued that there could be nothing real in Christianity if the archbishop's sermon were to be listened to, he says, "Let them suspend all further opposition to the doctrine of analogy, till the nature of it is more fully and rightly explained, and the true use of it in religion shown; together with the application of it to the defence of the truths and mysteries of the Gospel; and to the confutation of heresy and infidelity." The author's design seems to have been suggested by an observation of lord Bacon, to the effect that a divine logic was wanted: "This is the very thing," he says, "that I endeavour to perform in some degree." p. 23. It had been attempted by others in Bacon's lifetime, as for instance, by T. Granger, Preacher of God's word, who dedicated his work, entitled "the Divine Logike," to lord Bacon. It is, however, by no means a creditable performance.

P. 295. l. 7. *be thought undeserving of more than a passing notice from the theologian*] "To argue, therefore, (as too many are inclined to do,) from modern discoveries in chemistry, pneumatics, electricity, or the like, that human knowledge in general is not only progressive, but unlimited, is unwarrantable and presumptuous. Still more so is it, to infer that our improvement in spiritual attainments will necessarily keep pace with our advancement in experimental philosophy; since the study of physics has nothing in common with theology, properly so called, either as to its *principles*, or the *subjects* on which it is

employed, or the *end* which it proposes. In physics, our actual observation cannot extend beyond *second* causes, or the instrumental agents of the *material* world. The *first* cause will still be as remote as ever from our views; and the *immaterial* world will still elude our researches. What avails it, then, to boast of the inventions of the telescope, the microscope, the air-pump, and the like? Greatly as the progress of human arts and sciences may have been promoted by these inventions, yet we are not one step nearer to Divine knowledge by any thing which they can do for us; not at all better able by their means to 'find out the Almighty to perfection;' who still dwells in a pavilion of darkness inaccessible to human sight." Van Mildert's Boyle Lectures, sermon XV.

P. 296. l. 12. *even one single ultimate material law*] See professor Whewell's Bridgewater Treatise, Introduction, c. 3.

P. 297. l. 27. *the instrument employed by all*] "It is a real argument, notwithstanding its liability to ridicule, for religion implies facts, some of which analogy confirms, whereas of most it is the only proof." Butler's Analogy, II. 8. "Analogy is the instrument of the understanding, and forms that species of logic, which is peculiarly appropriated to subjects of theology, in every stage of that sublime and extensive study. It is the indispensable vehicle, by which the divine truths of religion are conveyed to the view and apprehension of the human intellect.....All our information of things that are divine must, therefore, be conveyed through an indirect channel: and as we have seen human language capable of being transferred, by this analogy, from material impressions to mental subjects, and of communicating the latter with certainty and precision, so by a similar, but higher, transfer from things which are human, material or mental, to those which are Divine, it is converted into an indirect, but certain, instrument of this celestial communication. Through the medium of this *necessary* expedient alone, we are rendered capable of receiving the mysteries of religion, which, in condescension to the apprehension and capacity of men, the Deity hath

graciously and abundantly employed." Tatham's Bampton Lectures, II. p. 121. See his reference to Lowth's Præl. Heb. XVI; also Dr. Hawkins's note to p. 100 of his Bampton Lectures; and especially that part of the Bishop of Hereford's Essay where he shows that analogy is a *direct persuasive* to the reception of Christianity. (p. 176.)

P. 298. l. 4. *himself deeply imbued*] The allusion is to the Bishop of Hereford, in whose Essay (before referred to) will be found the views summarily noticed in this passage.

P. 300. l. 1. *points of historical evidence*] See Sermons IV and V.

P. 301. l. 10. *additional and different proof*] See Sermon VI.

P. 302. l. 14. *the proper proof of Christianity*] See Mr. Newman's twelfth Sermon before the University.

P. 303. l. 17. *What was said so recently*] See Sermon VII.

P. 305. l. 1. *self-born theories and far-fetched allegories* &c.] This and the following paragraph have reference to the later writings of Mr. Blanco White; see his Life and Correspondence, vol. III. passim.

P. 307. l. 24. *the eschatology of modern philosophy*] Hagenbach mentions those modern speculative philosophers, "who deny the existence of the world to come altogether, and deify the present." vol. II. §. 301, note 10.

P. 314. l. 4. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*] Polycarp, Ep. to the Philipp. §. 12.

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